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THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure



Arthur O. Friel
Harold Lamb
Arthur D. Howden Smith
William Byron Mowery
Frank Robertson
Bill Adams
Georges Surdez
Raymond S. Spears
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*Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

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A New Serial, Three Complete Novelettes

IN 1856 Kansas was the fighting-ground for pro- and anti-slavery men—each faction struggling desperately to determine the policy of the State. Here, among "Regulators," bandits and Indians, a Northern man and a Southern meet in strange adventures. "RIFLE RULE," a five-part serial by Hugh Pendexter, begins in the next issue.

MR. MOGGER, the steward of the *Samarkand*, was an undersized sneak; yet all the officers of the ship were under his thumb—all, that is, except *Freddie Carslow*. "PETER THE GREEK," a complete novelette of the sea by W. Townend, in the next issue.

HE WAS fool enough to think that there was some place in Africa where he could hide. "THE ELEVATION OF AN EMPEROR," a novelette by William Ashley Anderson, complete in the next issue.

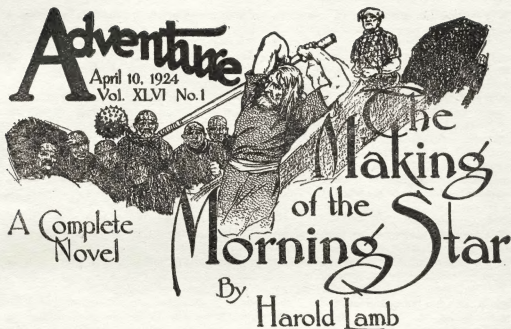
"**ONE-TWO**" **MAC** either made men or broke them. Neither *Homer* nor *The Kid* knew this when they stepped aboard the *Hawk*. Afterward they both knew. "THE JOB," a complete novelette by John Webb, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Adventure is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Adventure

April 10, 1924
Vol. XLVI No. 1



Author of "The Witch of Aleppo," "Men from Below," etc.

CHAPTER I

*From the Roof of the World we led out our steeds,
to follow the wind for a little play.*

*Where the banners of Islam were unfurled on the
ramparts of Sarai.*

*Not for wall or door did we draw our reins, till the
last of the banners were laid away,*

*And the shout of "Allah" was heard no more on
the ramparts of Sarai.—The minstrel's song.*

IT WAS a year of many omens. Lightning made the sign of the Cross in the sky, and meteors fell along the road to Jerusalem. When the dry season began, locusts came and destroyed the vineyards.

In that year, early in the thirteenth century of our Lord, the mailed host of the crusaders was idle. There was a truce between it and the Saracens who had reconquered Jerusalem and all of the cities of Palestine except the sea coast and the rich province of Antioch.

Before the truce the crusaders had suffered heavily in an attempt to take the port of Egypt, Damietta, and its triple wall. And the retreat over the desert to Ascalon had taken its further toll of the lives of peers and men-at-arms alike. Meanwhile, on three sides of the strip of sea coast, the Moslems gathered their power for the blow

that would send the *Croises* back into the sea from which they had come.

So the omens were interpreted as a warning.

The veriest springald of a squire of dames, new come from Venice or Byzantium and gay with curled ringlets and striped hose, knew that the truce would not last. The older men-at-arms who had fought under the banner of Richard of England, a generation ago, shook their heads and spent their days in the taverns.

Why not? The omens were evil—so the monks said. And the truce had been arranged by the paynim Saracens—an interval before the storm. The monks also said, it is true, that the locusts had eaten the vineyards but had spared the corn, and that this was a warning to drunkards. But the older warriors preferred to drown thought in their wine cups.

In the great northern province of Antioch, the nobles took refuge from the heat of the dry season. Led by Hugo, marquis of Montserrat and lord of Antioch, they crossed the long valley of the Orontes and made their way to a castle on the western march, a stronghold in the hills where they might hunt and listen to the tales of minstrel and troubador.

 ROBERT, castellan of Antioch, made his way out of a labyrinth of clay gullies and gave his bay charger the rein. A glance to right and left revealed no human being astride on the yellow desolation of sand over which he was passing to gain the thicket of reeds ahead.

These withered rushes, he knew, bordered the Orontes River, now low in its bed. The horse lengthened its stride as it scented the water, and Sir Robert urged it on with knee and voice. The bay was dark with sweat, for the knight had pushed on at a round pace since sun-up, when they left the last mud hovels of Port St. Simeon, and lost sight of the sea.

But they had still far to go before night-fall, and the valley of the Orontes was an ill place to linger—without a strong following of spears. And Sir Robert rode alone.

He had landed the day before at St. Simeon with his horse and little else. Two years ago he had been wounded in the Egyptian campaign and had been made prisoner by the Mamelukes at the wall of Damietta. It had taken many a month to arrange for his release, for among his enemies Sir Robert bore a name that set him apart from his fellows. By reason of the great sword he carried—a straight, tapering blade, a full four feet of blue steel—they called him Longsword.

And so did the minstrels name him when they made a song about him thereafter.

As he entered the rushes he drew rein sharply and turned in the saddle to stare down at a fresh trail that ran athwart the path he was following. Many a man would have passed it by with a casual glance. But the castellan had been born in the hills that towered over Antioch, and he knew the sandy wastes of the Orontes as his father before him had known the courtyard of an earl's hold in England.

The trail was a narrow one, yet possibly a hundred horses had passed over it. The tracks were made by unshod hoofs, so the riders must have come in from the desert. And they had kept to the rushes instead of the main path, higher up where the clay was firmer.

They had wished to hide their tracks as far as possible, yet they had chosen a route in the open where they would be easily observed, unless—the castellan fancied they had traveled at night.

He would have liked to follow the trail.

But a sound from the heights he had just left caused him to glance up quickly. The faint drumming of hoofs was unmistakable. An arrow's flight distant he noticed dust rising above the red clay ridges that lined the gullies.

Waiting long enough to be sure that only one rider was coming after him, he put the bay at the ford and crossed over the river, restraining the horse from stopping to drink. Nor did he look back as he rode slowly up the far bank.

Entering a dense growth of gray tamarisk, higher than the crest of his helm, Sir Robert halted and wheeled his horse to face the back trail where it turned sharply. Pulling the long, triangular shield from its loop over his shoulder, he slid his left arm through its bands and took his sword in his right.

Sir Robert smiled, and his gray eyes, under the steel of the helm, lighted with pleasure. The day's ride, that had been dull and hot until now, promised entertainment.

When he heard hoofs thudding softly over the sand he pricked the flanks of the bay with his spurs and the two horses met shoulder to shoulder at the edge of the tamarisks. And the castellan, leaning forward, thrust the top of his shield over the stranger's sword hilt, gripping the weapon in the fingers of his left hand.

The other rider was not slow to act. A twist of the reins, and his horse lunged aside. But the weapon, held by Sir Robert under the shield, slipped from its scabbard and remained in the hand of the knight.

"*Ma koharani!*" said the stranger under his breath. "And what now?"

He was a man gray-haired and massive of limb, clad in splendor of embroidered vest and kaftan, and his brown eyes were shrewd. A Moslem by his garments and turban, yet a Moslem who did not sit in the saddle like a Turk or Arab.

Slung over his shoulder, instead of a shield, was a lute. Behind his saddle, a prayer rug. Sir Robert thought him to be a wandering minstrel.

"Your name!" he demanded, for he ever liked plain words.

Arabic came easily to his tongue, as he had been raised among his father's slaves.

"I am Abdullah ibn Khar, the teller of tales, the cup-companion of an emperor."

The castellan considered him and saw that he was not afraid, though disarmed. The horse Abdullah bestrode was a remarkably fine one, a black Kabuli stallion.

"When does a minstrel of Islam follow the shadow of a Nazarene?" Sir Robert asked curtly.

The white teeth of the stranger flashed through the black tangle of his beard.

"*Wallah!* You ride with a loose rein. Surely a penned tiger is kin to the young warrior who is freed from camp. Not otherwise was I, in another day. To a woman or a battle, a man should ride boldly."

"And you?"

"I followed to see your face."

He studied the dark features of the Norman, the thin, down-curving nose and the powerful neck. Sir Robert had his mother's hair of tawny gold that fell to the mail coif on his shoulders. The hot temper of his race was his, yet the quiet, as well, of those who have great physical strength.

"Aye, a woman could summon you across the Orontes," nodded the minstrel, "if you chose to come. A battle is another thing. Are you the palladin of the Franks—the Longsword?"

"Aye, so."

"In the village by the sea a saddle-maker pointed you out and said that you were he, although many thought you dead. So I found my horse and sought you, for company on the road. There is a truce between our peoples."

"So that your spies may enter our walls."

"And your great lords may hawk and dice at leisure. Many things have I seen—your men-at-arms picking their noses, having no better thing to do—your king holding court on an island, because his foes can not ride over the paths of the sea. Yet I have not seen a leopard change his skin, nor a spy look otherwise than faithless. *Allah kerim!* Do I look like a pryer?"

Sir Robert thought that the man was bold enough. The horse under his hand might have been the gift of an ameer.

"You do not look like a minstrel," he laughed.

The man's words rang unpleasantly true. The Christian barons spent their days in bickering with each other. They were a weaker breed than the first crusaders who had fought their way over the desert to Jerusalem and left their bones in the land

they conquered. Venetians, Genoese, Bavarrians and French—the new lords were more apt at gleaning profit from trade than at defending the fiefs they held.

In the last years the men who had been the heroes of Sir Robert's childhood had passed elsewhere, some stricken by the plague, some thrust into the torture chambers of the neighboring Saracens. Others had sailed back to the courts of Europe.

Now the galleys brought to Palestine disorderly throngs of pilgrims who were more than willing to pay a fee to the Saracens to visit the Sepulcher and bear away a palm.

This troubled Sir Robert, who had known no other land, and no fellowship other than that of the *Croises*.

While he mused Abdullah had been studying his face. Now the minstrel leaned down swiftly and caught up a fistful of sand.

"My lord," he said, "I can read what passes in your mind. Who can change a book that is written, if that book be fate? No one among the Franks can keep Palestine for long, and your people will go again upon the sea whence they came. And their empire will pass—so!"

He loosed his fingers, letting fall the sand, and the castellan started.

"In the Fiend's name, mummer, did you ride from the sea to tell me this?"

"Nay, am I a fool?"

Abdullah's thick chest rumbled with laughter.

"I sought the Longsword, and I found a youngling," he added. "Did you, in truth, hold the wall of Antioch against Nasr-ud-deen and his spears?"

"Now that you have found me, seek another with your tricks. I have no largess to give."

Abdullah glanced reflectively at the castellan's faded surcoat and weather-stained shield from which the armorial device had long since been battered out.

"Largess, my lord, awaits me in the hall of Montserrat, whither I think you draw your reins—unless," he added gravely, "you fear to have Abdullah for *refik*—companion on the road."

Robert frowned and tossed the Moslem his simitar.

"Go where you will, knave!"

Turning the bay aside, he passed by the minstrel and let his horse go down to the river to drink. Meanwhile his glance

swept the Orontes and the bare, red hills that pressed down upon it, for signs of other riders who might have followed Abdullah, and lain concealed during the talk. But the far side of the river, shimmering through the heat haze, was empty of life.

Abdullah had followed his example, and when the stallion had lifted its fine head to let the water run out between its teeth, he turned in the saddle.

"Will the lord grant one boon to his servant? Your word that I shall not be harmed by the Nazarenes at Montserrat?"

Robert shook his head. He had been taught by his father never to break his word, whether given to a Moslem or one of his own peers. Abdullah, however, seemed satisfied with this response, and rode ahead up the trail of his own accord.

They had no more than entered the tamarisks again, when both reined to a halt, and the horses fidgeted. From up the hill loud voices drew nearer, with a clattering of iron, a yapping of dogs, a braying of asses and a creaking of wheels that made a small bedlam of the quiet of the valley.



FROM between the gray bushes emerged a gaunt man, stumbling under the weight of a tall banner of soiled samite upon which was embroidered a crimson cross. On his heels tramped a throng ragged and filthy, living scarecrows with feverish eyes.

Drawing aside from the trail, Robert watched the company pass. Some carried bundles slung to pike or staff—bundles that jingled and clanked, spoil beyond a doubt snatched from some native village. Many lay sick in the lumbering ox carts, and a leper walked alone at a cart tail, his bell clinking when he stumbled.

In another *araba* lay a woman, suckling a child scarcely a month old. A lad whose only garment was a torn shirt peered up through the dust at the knight and the minstrel.

"Good my lord, is't far to Jerusalem?"

"Too far for a springald such as you," Robert responded gruffly. "What company is this?"

The boy pointed proudly to the red cross sewn on his shirt.

"Messire," he piped, "I am from Provence, like the *demoiselle* herself. We heard the blessed de Courçon preach, and we are

come to deliver the city of Christ out of paynim duress."

He trotted on, and an English yeoman in green jerkin and feathered hood stopped to scowl blackly at Abdullah, and spit.

"A murrain upon yon infidel! When we set forth we e'en had forty thousand such as that!"—nodding after the boy—"and now, by the shadow of —, we have but two. Aye, he and the lass."

"—'s wounds!" cried Robert. "Was this a crusade of the children?"

"Ah, that it was, tall my lord! Verily the mob did betake itself to divers paths from Byzantium, some adventuring upon the sea—and St. Giles and St. Dunstan ha' mercy on them—some upon the coast, where they did fall to quarreling and warring with the Armenians, and are no better this day than crow's meat, drying' the wind. Our company was five hundred strong when we left Byzantium behind. And now —" He leaned on his staff and jerked a thumb at the rear of the party. The pilgrims numbered no more than fivescore.

"A black malison on the infidels, say I."

Robert wondered who the lass of this array might be, but just then some dozen men began to crowd around Abdullah, cursing him and fingering the axes at their belts. Some one flung a stone that made the black horse rear, the minstrel keeping his seat in the saddle with easy grace.

"Salvation awaits him who sheds the blood of a Saracen!" cried a giant with a pocked face.

"Seize his horse for Father Evagrius!" suggested another.

"Send him to pare the —'s hoofs!"

Taking up his reins, Robert urged the bay between the angry throng and his companion. Whatever the mission upon which Abdullah of Khar had been sent, the man was of gentle blood, and the nobles of Palestine had sworn a truce with the Moslems, giving hand and glove upon it. This oath Robert felt to be binding unless the enemy broke the truce.

"Back, ribalds," he commanded. "Pass on. This is a minstrel who rides with me."

The mob seemed made up of villains, of commoners, and the knight did not feel called upon to voice reasons for his action to them. As some men in rusty habergeons drew their swords, he rose in his stirrups to peer through the dust.

"Ho, the leader of this pack! The chief

of these rogues, I say—call hence your varlets or it will be the worse for them.”

At this the throng parted, and an old priest rode up on a white donkey led by a young girl. Flinging back the hood of her gown, she looked up angrily at Robert.

“Messire! Unsay what you have said, and that without ado.”

She took the charger’s rein in a gloved hand, and stamped a slender foot angrily and a little awkwardly, for it was clad in an Armenian red leather boot several sizes too large. Robert glimpsed a white face pinched by hunger and eyes shadowed by ripples of hair dark as a raven’s wing.

“This is our patriarch, Sir Lout,” went on the maid in a clear voice, “and Father Evagrius is blind. Climb down from your big horse and kneel and ask his pardon and blessing.”

“Nay, Ellen,” put in the patriarch, “it is not seemly that a stranger and a man-at-arms should kneel——”

“I say he shall! Nay, he is no sergeant-at-arms but a spurred lordling. His companion is a black-browed Moslem, and surely that is not seemly.”

Against the crowd of grease- and vermin-ridden men the slight figure of the maid stood out in bold relief. The pulse throbbed in her delicate throat, and the circles darkened under her eyes that blazed with the tensivity of long suffering. Abdullah glanced from her to Robert with some amusement.

“Father Evagrius,” observed the knight, “if you are verily the leader of this company you do ill to turn your back on the castle of Montserrat. The river is scarce a safe abiding-place.”

“Messire,” responded the maid Ellen quickly, “the lord of Montserrat hath seen fit to order us away from his hold to the river.”

“How? His Grace, the marquis——”

“——doth lack of courtesy, even as you. Perchance he feared lest the ribalds trample his coverts or disturb the sleep of his hunting-hounds.”

“*Demoiselle*,” explained Robert calmly, “I am the vassal of Hugo of Montserrat, and even now I seek his hold, above in the border mountain chain. And I do maintain that he would not send a Christian company into hazard of their lives.”

“Sir Stiff-and-Stuffy, I do maintain that your Hugo hath turned us off.”

While Robert stared at her, perplexed, yet finding an unexpected pleasure in meeting the glance of a girl of his own race after years spent without sight of a woman, he heard the gentle voice of the priest.

“The good marquis hath given his word that he will protect us against all foes upon his marches. And the Orontes, where we will pass the night, doth lie within his border.”

“Then are you safe,” nodded Robert. “Montserrat, having given his pledge, will keep it.”

“And now, Sir Vassal,” added the girl Ellen, “do you kneel to the patriarch. Ah, he is a very saint, and his spirit dwells near to the throne of God—Whom you miscalled a moment ago.”

Robert, looking down upon her youthful rage—the maid scarce numbered more than fifteen years—tried in vain to stifle a hearty laugh. At this she flushed from throat to eyes and slipped off the hawking gauntlet upon her hand. Standing on her toes, she struck him swiftly across the lips.

The force of the blow knocked the glove from her grasp. Robert swung down from his stirrup and picked it up. When he stepped toward her she did not draw back, but clenched thin hands and stood her ground. Her followers, who had time to take in Robert’s spread of shoulder and the length of his sword, made no move to molest him—though he paid no heed to them.

“I give you back your glove, *demoiselle*,” he said, smiling at her boldness. “And I would that you and the good father would turn back with me to Montserrat.”

“You mock us! Never—we would never go with you.”

“By the saints! I meant no ill to you or the blind priest,” denied the knight gravely.

“Come, Ellen,” said Evagrius, “you have delayed our march, and I feel that the sun is sinking near the earth. A week from this hour we shall bathe in the Jordan, and you shall see the Mount of Olives.”

His lined face was lighted by inward rejoicing as he felt for the donkey’s halter. But the girl bent her head, and Robert heard her sob as she moved away. Frowning, he watched them pass into the dust cloud.

Why, he wondered, had the maid wept? Surely there was pride in her, and gentleness, for she tended the helpless Evagrius.

"*Yah refik*," observed Abdullah, "you know little of a woman's spirit. That was a comely child and—I had fancied, lord, that you rode in such haste to meet with a woman."

"There are none in the castle we seek."

"*Wallah!* Can it be?"

He looked more than a little skeptical, yet the other's response appeared to give him satisfaction. As they passed up into the rocky gorges of the foot-hills Abdullah swung his lute around to his saddle-peak and began to sweep his fingers across the strings, chanting in his fine voice.

He sang of the joy of racing the stag over the hills, and of watching the falcon stoop, and of wandering under the dome of the stars. Robert, harkening despite himself, felt the magic of the other's gift of song. In his mind's vision he went back to boyhood, riding with his father over the desert floor, calling to stag-hounds. He knew again the thrill of loosing a hawk against the mid-day sky, and the cheer of the fire when the hunt was done and the wine-cup made the rounds.

Abdullah sang on, and Robert's memory changed to the days of stark hunger when a Moslem city was beleaguered; he watched the men fashioning great mangonels and massive siege towers—for he had been taught the arts of the siege engines when most boys were playing at jousting.

Lean years thronged into his mind. Years spent in the saddle with the nucleus of the mailed host that had struggled to keep the banner of the *Croises* upon the walls of Jerusalem. Days of hideous din, when streets under the eyes of the lad had run with blood until the very bodies were washed into the gutters.

As the minstrel sang on, he felt a restlessness in his veins. A craving to wander, as he had often done with his comrades, beyond the border and try his strength against foes.

"Faith!" he cried, spurring on the big bay. "We loiter apace."

Abdullah put aside his lute and brought up the black stallion, bridle to bridle.

"Aforetime," he observed, "I made that song for my master, who is master of all men."

Robert did not ask him who this might be, because at that moment they heard rising from the depths behind and below them a hum of human voices.

"*Te Deum laudamus*. We praise Thee, O Lord—we praise and magnify Thee forever."

It was the chant of the pilgrims, who were visible only as a thin line of dust moving into the maw of the Orontes, where the network of gorges was shadowed by the early sunset in royal purple, the pinnacles crowned with red and gold. The two men paused to look back.

"See, how Allah hath hung in the sky the crimson banners of death," remarked Abdullah. "And we—who knows what days are before us?"

CHAPTER II

A YEAR AND A DAY

THE glory of the sunset had dwindled when the two riders halted without the barbican gate of the castle of Montserrat. In the western sky the afterglow ran the length of the horizon, forming the semblance of a dull-red river flowing above the earth.

Light glimmered from the upper embrasures of the black donjon. The wall behind the moat shut out the courtyard from the travelers' sight; but they heard voices and the clinking of bowls on wooden tables and a snatch of song.

Robert, who was mightily hungry, struck the bars of the peep-hole with his mailed fist. In the hall of the main keep he knew that Hugo, his liege lord, Marquis of Montserrat and master of Antioch, sat at table with a goodly company. And the castellan was eager to greet his peers, who thought him dead after an absence of two years in Egypt, and to satisfy his hunger.

"Ho, the gate!" he shouted. "Open in the name of Montserrat."

But the face of the warder that peered through the barred opening in the portal did not withdraw.

"Thy name! And thy companion's name! Small thanks would be ours, I trow, if we unbarred to a Saracen after sundown."

"Sir Robert, castellan of Antioch, am I—*Longu' espée*, Longsword, forsooth. And he with me is a paynim minstrel with a song for the marquis. What now?"

Robert's mustache twitched in a grin of amusement as he heard an exclamation, followed by whispered voices. Other faces pressed to the bars to scrutinize him in the dim light.

"Out upon thee for a lying wight,"

growled one. "Sir Robert was racked, carted and buried by the accursed Mame-lukes."

Behind the gate was heard the grinding clink of a cross-bow, wound up to speed a shaft. Robert turned to Abdullah.

"Minstrel, are you resolved to enter this hold? Methinks they give but an ill welcome to wayfarers—though Hugo loves well a good tale and a tuneful voice. Forget not that I stand in no way your protector, and what befalls is e'en your hazard."

"So be it."

"—'s death!"

Robert kicked the gate impatiently.

"Set wide the gate and make an end of words. Fetch a cresset, varlets, or I'll set the pack of you aswim in the moat."

Some one remarked that this sounded rarely like the Longsword, and a torch was brought while they examined the visitors. Then the bars were let down slowly, and Robert pushed inside, followed by Abdullah.

A bearded captain of the warders crossed himself with a muttered—

"Mary preserve us—'tis he!"

The men who were lowering the draw-bridge glanced at each other and whispered behind their hands, and it was several moments before the castellan and his companion dismounted in the courtyard and were greeted by a staring squire.

Word of their arrival had passed to the main hall before them. A slim poursuivant who bowed low at the door seemed to share the general hesitation in announcing them, and Robert was fain to chuckle again at the bewilderment of those who greeted him. At the end of the lofty hall candles gleamed on the table set on a dais for the master of the castle and his guests, and here a man stood up to peer over the candles as the knight strode forward between the long tables of the henchmen and commoners.

"*Madre a Dios!*"

His broad, olive face paled, and he grasped the arm of his chair.

"If ye be a spirit, why—why, know then that I have mourned you right hardily, having given to the shave-pates a ten shekels, aye, and thirty soldi for clank of bell and patter of prayer for this your soul. If ye be Sir Robert, lad, i' the flesh, why—"

"That am I, and sharp-set with hunger into the bargain."

"Ha, that would be the *Longu' espée*. Why—boil me, lad, but we heard that you were cut down at the gate of Damietta. Aye, a Templar saw you carried within, and shortly thereafter your bare body hung out on the wall headless, to despite your comrades."

Hugo shook his head doubtfully—a craggy head, yet covered with curled ringlets, oiled after the fashion of his native Italy. His broad, stooped body was clad in silk, covered with a damask mantle, fur-trimmed, that fell below the toes of his velvet shoes, which were turned up in the latest style and held by silver chains running from his girdle. His near-sighted eyes blinked at Abdullah, and Robert made known the minstrel.

"A fair greeting have we," quoth the marquise, fingering his chin, "for *trouvère* and *déchanteur*, for makers and tellers of tales. But a noose and a fire beneath for spies. Bid him to the lower board."

He turned to his companions.

"*Messires*, give greeting to this Englishman who is well come, having cheated the Saracens yet another time—though I vow to St. Bacchus my spleen rose to my gullet when he fronted us."

After removing his bascinet and handing his shield to a squire-at-arms, Robert hooked his sword over a chair and seated himself, to wash his hands in a silver bowl offered by a serving knave. Hugo divided his attention between his foot-gear and his guest impatiently until Robert had stayed his hunger.

"*Old*, knaves—wine of Cyprus for our guests. Come, lad, the tale! Messer Guiblo—" he nodded at a thin, handsome Venetian whose rich velvets were the envy of the poorer liegemen—"made search for you in the camp of the king, and all reports had you dead."

He bent forward to lean on the table addressing the other guests.

"Know, messers, that Sir Robert, called *Longu' espée*, did once save for us our city of Antioch, being rarely skilled at the making of stone-casters and fire-throwers, aye, at counterwalls and curtains, *chat-castels* and all the engines of siege."

Besides the Venetian, Guiblo, a young Provençal, sat at the side of the marquise. Hugo spoke of him as the *Sieur de la Marra*, a *Hospitaler*. On the far side of the knight of the Marra was a dark-faced

Lombard whom Robert knew as Hugo's seneschal. Other warriors and a scattering of Venetian merchants he did not know. No other Englishmen sat at the table. But Robert had noticed a woman who had the chair on the right of the marquis.

"The Madonna del Bengli—" Hugo followed his glance—"honors our poor dwelling of Montserrat for sake of the hunting and hawking in the hills."

Robert rose and bowed courteously, wondering why such a woman should come over the valley of the Orontes for the sake of a little sport. She was a Venetian undoubtedly, and, he learned later, the cousin of the man Guiblo. Certainly she was beautiful and aware of it, for her bronzed hair was scented and coiled skilfully on her bare shoulders; her white skin gave no evidence of the sun's touch.

"Equally honored are we," she added lightly, "in such a visitor and his grace of Montserrat in such a vassal."

Her curving lips accented the word vassal, and she turned to stare at Robert out of clear blue eyes. Guiblo leaned back to pick his teeth and exchange a word with the seneschal. Robert was little skilled in the manners of a court, or in play of words, yet it struck him that his welcome at Montserrat lacked of heartiness.

"By Venus, her girdle," lisped the young knight of the Hospital, whose cheeks were warmed by wine, "would we had a Provençal to make song out of *Longu' espée's* tale. Nay, his name is already known from Antioch to Ascalon. Didst bind the infidel jailers with their own fetters, Sir Robert—or win the heart and abetment of some fair Saracen maid, as the fashion is?"

"Not so," made answer Robert bluntly. "Your Grace, I bring but two words. One a warning, one a request."

Hugo set down his cup.

"Then let us have the warning."

"A hundred Saracens armed and mounted for war passed through your border within the day."

"Now by the slipper of our fair madonna, that could not be. Out watchers on the borderland have seen no foray pass. Nay—"

"I saw the tracks, across the river."

The marquis pursed his lips and shook his head, then signed for a servant to fill the Longsword's cup.

"I pray you, Messer Englishman," put

in Guiblo incredulously, "how could you discern from tracks in the sand what manner of men passed over?"

"How? The hoofs were small—blooded Arabs or Turkomans. They were unshod—and so from the desert. To my thinking no pack-animals were among them, and so each horse had its rider."

Mistress Bengli raised slim fingers in polite surprise, and by so doing displayed gleaming sapphire and turquoise rings, rarely fashioned.

"Truely we have a magician with us. Do they not say that the Egyptians are masters of the black arts?"

"Some band of villagers," scoffed Hugo, "chanced to wander along the river. And now your boon. Hawk or horse, or—a fair maid of Circassia for your beguilement; 'tis granted ere asked."

"My life it is," Robert smiled, "I seek at your hand."

"*Misericordé*—how?"

"At the Damietta wall I was struck down by a Mameluke's mace. It is true they pulled my body within the gates; but the hurt mended, and in time I could mount a horse. Being captive, they held me for ransom, yet could no letter be sent in the turmoil until truce was made between Saracens and *Croises*. Then did the paynim ameers grant me a year and a day to journey to my overlord and raise the payment for the freedom of my body."

Some of the Venetians looked skeptical, for seldom did the enemy put trust in the crusaders to this extent. Yet they were aware that the Longsword had before this kept his promises to the Moslems.

"Well," observed Hugo, "you are here, and you are free. The Cairenes can not lay hand on you now. On my life, I was not aware that you had a tongue to trick those unshriven dogs."

"I gave my word to return to their camp if the ransom is not in their hands within a year and a day."

"Oho, a prayer and a gold candlestick to the cathedral at Antioch will eke shrive you of a pledge to infidels. So say the monks."

Robert shook his head gravely. "My word was passed."

"But, fool, the Mamelukes would tie you to horses and split you. You have emptied too many of their saddles and wrought them too often for them to forego the pleasure of torturing you."

He glanced sidewise at the set face of the youth and emptied his goblet, then laid his hand on the shoulder of the woman.

"Do you make shift to alter the mind of our stubborn vassal; perchance he will listen to reason from other lips than ours——"

Seeing that Robert frowned, he thought for a moment.

"What then is the sum of your ransom?"

"Two thousand broad pieces of gold."

"Horns of the fiend! 'Tis the release of a baron of the realm."

A smile touched the lips of the knight.

"My lord, having fought against Longsword, it chanches that the Saracens do hold me to be greater than I am."

 THE demand of the vassal was a just one. By the feudal laws Robert was bound to serve in the wars of Montserrat, and to come mounted and fully armed at the summons of his lord. For this service, instead of a fief and lands, Hugo had appointed him castellan of Antioch, granting him the payment and perquisites of his office—for though the Englishman was young for such responsibility he had shown his ability to handle the defense of a stronghold against siege. If Hugo had been taken captive, Robert would have been obliged to raise his share of the marquis' ransom. So he had sworn when he placed his hands between the knees of Hugo, and his lord was equally bound.

The marquis flung himself back in his chair with an oath, and Mistress Bengli studied the jewels on her fingers, a slight frown creasing her smooth forehead.

"Two thousand bezants!" he muttered. "It passes reason—to raise such a sum for a mere punctilio, a splitting of hairs. *Mort de ma vie!* Shall we mortgage our souls to swell the wallets of filthy unbelievers. Eh?"

The woman close to his ear spoke softly, and the Italian shrugged.

"You went to Egypt on no mission of mine, Longsword; and, now I think of it, you are cursed with wandering. Let the matter stand for the nonce, and we will talk of it at a better time."

"Not so, lord," objected Robert at once. "If you can not advance to me the entire sum, I must make shift to find a share of it, and perchance sell my office of castellan."

"Pardon, *messire*," put in the Venetian, Guiblo, "you are no longer castellan, for the king hath appointed another."

"Who?"

"Aye, now it comes to my mind," laughed the marquis, "our new monarch out of France hath brought with him a vassal who hath rendered loyal service to the State. Believing you dead, he did appoint Messer Guiblo here castellan."

The thin Venetian bowed.

"I regret the mischance suffered by the youth, and I would that he had seen fit to endeavor to advise his liege of his situation while in Egypt."

"I give you thanks for your courtesy," responded Robert, frowning; and Guiblo's eyes narrowed.

The Englishman had not kept his disappointment out of his voice. True, he could not quarrel with the turn matters had taken. The king whose standard he had followed, Baldwin, had died in the last years when Jerusalem had been lost, and the baron who had been chosen to succeed him was a favorite of the French king. But now, unless the marquis aided him, as he was bound to do, Robert would have no means of raising his ransom in Palestine. And not a man present at the table doubted that the Englishman would keep his promise to return to Damietta and his captors if the sum were not raised.

"My lord," he asked, "what is your answer—yea or nay?"

Hugo curled an oiled ringlet around his forefinger and sucked in his lips. Silence fell on the company, and Mistress Bengli exchanged a quick glance with Guiblo.

"Alas," she sighed audibly, "our table doth lack of gaiety since the coming of Sir Robert. Will your Grace permit me to answer the Englishman?"

"Aye," quoth Hugo, pleased. "Let us hear the judgment of Diana. *Pardi*, Sir Robert, it would have availed you more to urge your suit more gallantly. Then the madonna might have smiled upon you—for you are comely enough to win favor with the fair."

"The fairest face in Palestine," murmured the Hospitaler a little vaguely.

"And now," she added, "having heard the plea of the vassal, we must take counsel of the learned. How now, O seneschal and merchants—are not we in the hands of the money-lenders? Hath his Grace of Montserrat such a sum where it can be called in and rendered into gold?"

Piculph, the Lombard seneschal, had

gaged the pleasure of the marquis and made answer accordingly.

"Nay, *domna*, the very jewels of the rings you wear are paying usury to the Jews."

"Then must we pawn our very lives, that this dour Englishman——"

A chuckle from Hugo interrupted her, and she wrinkled her brows in pretended displeasure. The marquis lolled in his chair, delighted with the word-play of his favorite, while he stroked the feathers of a favorite hawk perched beside him.

"—be safe," she concluded, "unless he dare seek his ransom with his sword from the hands of those Moslems about whom he doth prate so roundly."

It became clear to Robert that they were mocking him, for the marquis was lord of wide lands and great treasure. Guiblo disliked him, realizing that the former castellan of Antioch might urge his claim upon the king. Hugo, indifferent to everything that did not minister to his pleasure, had little desire to grant a small store of gold to the knight for what he held to be merely a quirk of conscience.

"And so," said Mistress Bengli, smiling full upon Robert, "it is our pleasure that you should seek to gain your treasure from the castles of the paynims—a worthy quest for the *Longu' espée*——"

"Aye, let the wild boar root it i' the thick-et," shouted Piculph.

"—for a year and a day," cried the woman shrilly above the maudlin merriment of the feasters, "and that is the sentence of the court of his peers."

"Is it yours, my lord?"

Robert leaned forward to address his host.

"It is so," responded Hugo without looking up.

But up from the table rose the *Sieur de la Marra* unsteadily, yet with a purpose in his bleared eyes.

"By the throne of Antichrist, by the palladium of the Horned One, 'tis a foul wrong so to mischief a warrior of the Cross. Has your Grace forgotten that he kept your wall of Antioch against the Saracen spears when the waters of the moat were red with blood?"

Alone of those present the knight of the Marra was not bound to the fortunes of Montserrat by ties of ambition, and Guiblo frowned at his words. The recent truce had altered the situation in Palestine, and the

mastery of the rich coast cities was passing into the hands of the Lombards and Venetians who had no wish to see the barons of England or France return to the court. Knowing that Hugo wished to be rid of the Longsword, Guiblo made answer accordingly:

"Hast wooed the cup too long this night, Sir Hospitaler. Art a fool to give belief to the tale of this wanderer. If my lord of Montserrat had not deemed his tale a lie, he would have granted the *Longu' espée* his boon. But two thousand pieces of gold for a vassal's ransom passes belief—when the asker rides with a Moslem."

"Now by Venus, her girdle," cried the *Sieur de la Marra*, reaching a quivering hand for his sword, "that touches upon mine honor——"

"I give you thanks, Sir Hospitaler," broke in Robert, "for your abetment, but no man's aid seek I."

The red lips of Mistress Bengli curled, for here was a quarrel brewing, and she loved well to see men put themselves to the hazard of drawn steel. She did not fear for Guiblo, knowing that her cousin was well able to make shift for himself, and as for Hugo—a vassal might not strike or miscall his lord. But she was more than a little puzzled when Robert signed for his cup to be filled and waited until Hugo had done likewise.

"My lord," he said slowly, "I greet you with this, my stirrup cup. In this hour I ride from Montserrat, and my allegiance is at an end. No vassal am I, but my own man henceforth, by your will. With Messer Guiblo and the seneschal I shall have other speech."

He emptied his goblet and Hugo did the same. Then the Englishman beckoned to Abdullah at the lower table, and in the silence that had fallen upon the company his summons was clearly heard.

"O minstrel, a song for the people of the castle. We have had our dinner, it seems, and the wine thereof, and in this place a man must pay a reckoning for all that is bestowed upon him. Sing, O Abdullah, of gold and gear and treasure, that they may be pleased, for my entertainment was but indifferent and dull."

At this the marquis flushed, while his followers fingered the poniards in their belts; but Mistress Bengli laughed musically, for the Englishman promised to be entertaining after all. Abdullah rose without comment

and salaamed to the marquis and the woman. Advancing to the edge of the dais, he lifted his lute and plucked softly at the strings.

"In the name of Allah, the All-Compassionate, the All-Wise," he began in liquid Arabic, "will the illustrious lords harken to the tale of a poor wayfarer?"

His powerful hand swept over the lute, and he chanted, deep-voiced:

"With Allah are the keys of the unseen, and who is bold enough to take in hand the keys? Doth lack of gold, O king, or jewels for the hilts of swords, or horses fleetier than the desert storm or garments softer than the petals of flowers? Then harken to my tale of Khar, the Land of the Throne of Gold."

Those of the listeners who understood Arabic, and they were many, glanced up in some surprize. The legend of Khar had come to their ears before this, but never in the same guise.

They had heard that beyond the eastern mountain wall was a wide desert and beyond this a sea of salt water. Far to the east lay the greatest of the Moslem kingdoms, so it was said. This was known as Khar or Khorassan, * and many were the tales of its wealth.

Like Cathay or the land of Prester John, the myth was voiced by wandering minstrels, and no man knew the truth of it, and no warrior of the *Croises* had penetrated farther to the east than the city of Damascus.

"Know, O Auspicious Lord," chanted Abdullah, "that it hath been my lot to follow the path of a wayfarer. From the Roof of the World I have looked down upon a land fairer than moonlight on a mountain lake; I have walked through gardens where roses were wrought of rubies, with emeralds for leaves; I have sat in a marble tower and beheld the passing of a monarch who hath more riders to his command than the Sultan of Damascus hath stones in his highways. Verily, as grains of sand is the number of warriors in this land. They walk in silvered mail with the plumes of birds upon their heads; their weapons are of blue steel, and the power of their host is such that the Mamelukes of Egypt would bow down to them, even as grass before a rising wind."

Some of the guests smiled, and the

*Khar, or Kharezmia, is now known as Persia. The old name is to be found on maps as late as the end of the eighteenth century.

Venetians, who were the wisest of the assemblage, sneered openly as at a palpable lie.

"*Ya maulaya*, O my lord, this is truth. The very trees of the palace gardens in this place are silver; and the monarch thereof hath a lake within his city—a lake built by the hands of his slaves. Within the courtyard of his castle stands a fountain, casting forth water perfumed with musk and aloes."

Hugo of Montserrat sighed and curled the lock of hair upon his forehead.

"In this land the lords are carried about by their slaves; save to mount a horse they do not set foot to earth. When the king drinks *nakars* and trumpets sound; when he walks in his chambers, rolls of silk are spread before him. He dwells in a city so great that the eye can not measure it from one place. The women of his court are the fairest in the world, for they are brought from every land that his riders can adventure to.

"Verily," said the teller of tales slowly, "this king is the lord of life and death, for men seeking the joys of his court oft-times perish in the journey thither. But, having come, their joys are the fullest that life can measure out."

CHAPTER III

THE RIDERS FROM KHAR

"WITH Allah are the keys of the unseen."

Abdullah ceased his say and took his hand from his lute.

"But who will seek them out?" he added.

The listeners glanced at each other, and Mistress Bengli, chin on hand, smiled and watched the gleaming jewels on her fingers. Many had come to Palestine believing that it held the lure of the fabulous Khar and had found it otherwise.

"I have not heard the tale related so," observed Hugo. "Ha, minstrel, you are skilled in your craft—for you make us think you have dwelt in Khar."

"Sire, I have."

Guiblo shook his head.

"Then, rogue; you must have crossed the great desert and passed through the Iron Gates of which your folk prate."

Abdullah bowed assent.

"The road is no easy one. Nay, a full three moons must a man sit in the saddle,

and the horse should be of good blood. In an elder day one of the heroes of the Franks led his host over the desert and saw the salt sea that lies in the desert."

"His name?"

"Iskander."

From the end of the table a monk who had not spoken until now looked up with a gleam of interest.

"By your leave, my lord, that should be Alexander, King of Macedon. Aye, the misguided scholasticists do relate in their profane books the deeds of the Macedonian."

"And how did Alexander pass the Iron Gates?"

"With his sword," Abdullah said calmly.

"And yet—did he live to set foot in his own land again? Nay; the Iron Gates take their toll."

"What manner of thing are they?"

"In the books of the cosmographers, Strabo and Herodotus, Messer Guiblo," explained the monk, "there is a mark on the road to the east inscribed with the words *Caspiae Pylæ*, or Gates of the Caspian. Their nature is unknown, for since the day of the Cæsars no Christian hath ventured there."

"Riddles," scoffed Hugo in his own speech. "'Tis a myth that holds no profit for us."

Abdullah appeared to grasp his meaning.

"O king," he observed gravely, "riders have come out of Khar on a foray, and the traces of their horses can be seen within your borders."

"My watchers beheld them not."

"Who can behold the stars in broad day, or the *djinn* folk who ride upon the winds at night? Does the lord of the castle wish to see a *talsmin*—a token that his servant's word is true?"

Thrusting his hand into his girdle, the minstrel drew forth something that flashed in the flickering candle-light—a necklace of rubies cut into the semblance of roses, strung on a cord of finely wrought gold.

"Such jewels as these the women of Khar wear on their throats."

Mistress Bengli caught up the chain in her white fingers, and the others crowded close to stare from the gleaming rubies to Abdullah, who seemed inwardly amused by the excitement he had caused.

Now, considering him narrowly, Longsword thought that no playing of the lute could fashion such muscular hands, and no

warbling of nights could give such note of command to a voice. Abdullah bore himself more like an *atabeg*—a leader of a host—than a minstrel.

"Here is a strange rogue forsooth," muttered the seneschal, Piculph, "with a baron's ransom in his belly-band."

Robert frowned, for he wished no ill to the teller of tales, and Abdullah might as well have cast his valuable chain into the Orontes as to have shown it to the woman of the Montserrat. Hugo would cheerfully slit open a hundred natives on the chance that one had swallowed a single ruby like these. But Abdullah seemed no whit fearful of the fate he had called down on himself, for he had ceased to watch Mistress Bengli and was eying the great tapestries that shook and bellied upon the walls as the gusts of a rising wind buffeted the castle walls and whined through the cracks. The man, heedless of the company at the table, was listening to the sounds of the night beyond the walls.

At that moment there was heard a mutter of voices at the entrance to the hall, the clank of a long scabbard on the stone flagging of the floor, and the captain of the warders stood within the curtain with uplifted hand.

"Pardon, good my lord, I bear tidings. On the river road we have seen an array of Moslems. At midnight I went forth beyond the hamlet to overlook the valley, and in the lower gorge armed men do assemble in ranks. Wilt give command to man the walls, or sally forth?"

"Ha—so!"

Hugo stroked his heavy chin and glanced at his companions.

"Sir Robert had the right of it, methinks—and the watchers upon the hill towers shall taste of the strappado. What is your counsel, *messires*?"

The young *Sieur de la Marra* struck the table with his fist and set the flagons dancing.

"By the Cross, *messires*, the paynims do challenge us. My men and I fare forth to seek them."

Hugo exchanged a low word with Messer Guiblo, and the Hospitaler caught the mention of *Longu' espée's* name.

"Let it be so. Ho, *armiger*—my helm and shield. Without there, sound the oliphant to muster our followers."

Mistress Bengli put her hand to her

throat to stifle a scream, and the chain of rubies fell to the table and slid down upon the rushes, whence Abdullah picked them up without being observed. This done, the minstrel made his way quietly to the wind-whipped tapestries in a dim corner.

An ivory horn sounded a mellow note in the courtyard, and the clatter of horses, led from the stables, made answer. When Hugo's helm was laced on by a squire-at-arms, he summoned the captain of the guard and peered around the hall.

"In the fiend's name, where went the infidel? Seek him out—you, and you—and retrieve me his chain, or Piculph shall strip and flay you. He stood here but a moment ago—"

"The knave hath a rare trick of foretelling the mind of your Grace," muttered Guiblo. "And his crony the English boar hath forsaken us as well. Methinks he bears you ill intent."

"Nay, the youth is a wildling no more. You dared much when you miscalled him. The man's courage is proof, and he will seek you out ere he parts from us."

With a smile the Venetian pulled on his mailed gloves and tightened his belt.

"Grant me leave to deal with him—else he will hie him to the court and brew trouble for our quaffing. Harken, lord—there be too many eyes and tongues in this hall. Once in the gullies by the river, ere the search for the infidels is ended, my men will attend the Englishman. A blow from an ax, and he will lack his right hand. Thereafter will he bray less loudly of his wrongs."

The marquis shrugged.

"I'll hear no more. Yet must I ride forth lest the cursed Hospitaler suspect something amiss."

Pausing at the donjon gate to tell off a score of men-at-arms to remain and secure Abdullah, he strode to his horse and signed for the clarion to sound the march. Flaring cressets on the walls cast a smoky light over the courtyard and the lance streamers of the knights. Behind these dark masses of pikemen and archers were forming under Piculph's orders.

Under the lifted portcullis the Hospitaler and the Longsword sat their powerful chargers impatiently, having put aside their private grievances in the presence of the common foe. Hugo glanced around and saw that Abdullah could not have left the donjon without being seen; nor was he vis-

ible in the courtyard. Satisfied of this, the master of the castle called for his standard to be lifted, and the first line of riders lowered their lances to pass under the portcullis, following the *Sieur de la Marra* over the drawbridge.



THE great hall was being ransacked by servants and men-at-arms, who turned over tables and peered into chests, clustering upon the stairs that led to the chambers above, while Mistress Bengli cried to her serving women to lead the search for the Moslem and his jewels into the kitchen and cellars. Eagerly she urged on the men and ran to one of the doorways to listen to the tumult above-stairs.

Standing here in the shadow, a powerful hand closed over her mouth, holding firm her chin.

"O lady," whispered the voice of the minstrel, "would you live to greet the king, your lover, this night? *Ai-a*, life is sweet, is it not? Nay, do not lift your hands, but walk between me and the light—so—and seek the way that leads to the kitchen—so!"

Rigid with fright, Mistress Bengli stumbled along the swaying arras and turned into an archway that brought them to a narrow hall. From the corners of her eyes she saw that Abdullah had his simitar in his left hand, and the gleam of bare steel sent a chill into her veins.

"It is not fitting, lady," went on the minstrel, "that a man of Khar should loiter in the hall of the feasters when a battle is joined. So, pray that no man of yours shall meet with us, and lead me to the stables—nay, not into the light!"

While she grasped little of his speech, his intention was clear and Mistress Bengli breathed a sigh of relief when they stood in the shadow of the horse sheds. Abdullah whistled softly, and somewhere a charger neighed. Drawing the woman with him, he found and saddled his horse, taking his time; for the sheds were deserted after the departure of the riders. He had noticed a small gate in the outer wall, and toward this he walked the black stallion and tapped the bars with his sword.

Trembling, she lifted the bars and set them aside, then turned the key and tugged open the gate. Abdullah glanced out and saw that the moat did not extend to this

angle. Mistress Bengli stepped back, only half believing she was to suffer no hurt from the wayfarer.

"Say to your lord," he laughed, "that Abdullah ibn Khar rode to Montserrat upon a mission. Aye, to find one among the Franks who was worthy to adventure to the Throne of Gold. Say that he found not such a man within Montserrat, and so—the peace!"



AT THE edge of the wooded land the Montserrat archers who were the advance of the marquis' array halted and studied the open valley below them. The remnant of a moon hung over the hills to the south, lighting the expanse of rolling sand that extended to the riverbed. In a hollow by the water glowed the embers of a half-dozen camp-fires.

A raven croaked from the shadows, and the screaming snarl of a panther made response. Listening, the archers heard stealthy rustling in the dry brush on either side. They had come upon no sign of the Moslems in the march of a full league, down from the castle. And they saw nothing amiss in the camp of the pilgrims below them.

So they reported to Longsword and the Hospitaller who rode up presently, followed by the main body. After scanning the valley carefully Sir Robert surprised his companion by putting spurs suddenly to the bay and galloping out upon the sand.

He rode into the camp unchallenged and halted by the ox-carts that were ranged near the fire. The Sieur de la Marra paused to look down at the pilgrims who lay in scattered groups in the hollows, and to swear under his breath.

"—! Montserrat feared an ambushment, yet methinks naught lies in wait here save Death."

At the coming of the crusaders jackals and snarling four-footed things slipped out of the camp into the shadows. Even the oxen had been cut down, and one man still gripping an ax was prone in the ashes of the fire, his head half-burned away.

Torches were kindled by the archers while the riders quieted their horses, made restless by the penetrating smell of blood. Some stared at the carts where a score of bodies lay about the woman who still held the baby in her arms—all pierced by arrows. In the shallows of the rivers the

standard-bearer sprawled, the shaft of the banner floating beside his head. In all quarters the sand was trampled by horses' hoofs, yet the pilgrims had had no horses. The Hospitaller dismounted to examine one of the arrows and announced that it was a kind he had not seen before—a short shaft, unbarbed but with long feathering.

"It smacks of an Arab bow. Ha, *messires*, I wot well the minstrel spoke the truth! The riders who did this pretty business came from the desert, and mayhap from Khar."

Whoever they were, the raiders had taken the camp by surprize and had wrought fearful havoc with small loss to themselves. No bodies of Saracens were to be seen, and if any had been slain they were borne off by their comrades. The attack—judging by the numbers of beasts that gathered about the scene—had taken place some hours before, so the Montserrat watchers must have beheld the foray riding back from the river to one of the trails that led through the mountains.

Pursuit was not to be thought of. The *Croises* had learned after bitter experiences that their heavily armed warriors and sturdy chargers could not deal with the swift-moving Saracens in broken country.

"A fair riddance, *messires*," mouthed Hugo, turning over the body of a ragged lad with his lance point. "We need no longer feed the rabble, though we must e'en bury it—Fra Anselmo will see to't. Come, who is for the castle?"

The archers and pikemen who had been combing over the scattered packs of the pilgrims, already pillaged by the raiders, began to move toward their officers, while Guiblo and his following with Piculph the Lombard and Hugo's squire drew closer about the three.

But the young Hospitaller stooped to the stained sand and held up a slender gauntlet embroidered with silk initials.

"E. de I.—*requiescat in pace*, whosoever ye be—a woman's hawking-gauntlet, or I'm a turn-spit. What—how now?"

Robert had taken the glove from him and turned to face the marquis.

"*Messire*," said he, "it lingers in my memory that you did give your knightly word to the rabble that you would defend them against all foes upon this, your land."

As Hugo was silent, in surprize he added—

"Those who utter what they will not defend with their bodies, I do hold arrant cowards, recreant to their vows."

Whipping out his sword, he placed the glove near its point and, leaning forward, tossed it deftly on Hugo's saddle-peak.

"By this do I challenge your grace, Hugo Amardis of Montserrat, to try by combat in this hour which of us be true and which be false."

Now at this the liegemen of Montserrat stared and muttered and drew closer, so that a ring of armed men was formed about the group, and there fell a silence in which the snuffling breathing of the horses was clearly heard. Passion darkened the swarthy face of the marquis, but before he could frame an answer Robert spoke again.

"My lord, the laws of Palestine do not permit one who hath been a vassal to summon his liege into the combat of justice. So, will your Grace name from among your vassals a champion to take your place?"

Hugo knew well that he could not have withstood the Englishman's sword, but his anger flared the higher with the thought. Snatching up the gauntlet and casting it down on the sand, he shouted hoarsely:

"Piculph—Guiblo—Sir Curthose, to me! Wilt suffer this upstart to badger me? A thousand —, I say—to me!"

"Nay, one will suffice, your Grace," laughed the Hospitaller, who had recovered from his surprise at Robert's plain speaking after his self-control in the castle hall. "It were a foul wrong, meseems, to set three devils on one Englishman."

Two retainers of the Venetian who had been hovering close to the Longsword's flank, drew back when spectators thronged about them. Messer Guiblo urged his horse close to the powerful form of the Lombard and whispered to him swiftly. Piculph gnawed his lip, then nodded assent.

"I'll cut his comb, my lord," he said aloud, "then he'll crow less loud, I ween."

"Good!" cried Robert. "Twas my wish to bid you farewell in this fashion."

Hugo reined back his horse to glance questioningly at Messer Guiblo, who nodded reassuringly and slipped back among his men. The Sieur de la Marra also retreated to leave the ring clear for the fighters.

In the half-light of the low moon it was easily seen that the two were a match in

bigness of bone and height, though the Englishman had the better horse. Piculph glanced about him once and swung down from his stirrup, choosing to fight on foot.

It was in the code of the law that in the lists of justice the two combatants should be armed equally in all particulars. Robert



dismounted without hesitation, trying the firmness of the sand with a mailed foot and letting fall his shield—as the Lombard carried none.

But when Piculph drew his sword a grim laugh went up from the Montserrat liegemen. The Lombard's weapon was no longer than his adversary's yet it tapered hardly at all, being blunt at the tip and heavier by half than the Longsword's brand. It was a sword to be wielded by two hands, and so Piculph had no need of a shield.

The watchers pressed closer, jostling one another and muttering between set teeth. The hollow where the camp lay was in a natural amphitheater that held the heat of the day, and they sweated under the weight of armor, their veins warmed by the late drinking. Many stood on the huddle of the slain to see the better.

Piculph was no loiterer. Striding forward, he swung the two-handed blade in circles, his muscular arms cracking.

"A purse of gold that he slays the Longsword or makes him cry mercy," offered Sir Curthose of Var to the young Sieur de la Marra.

But the Hospitaller gnawed his lip in silence as he watched Robert, who stood erect in his tracks, his sword held close to his chest, the point upraised.

With a grunt Piculph struck down and sidewise at his foe's throat, and steel sang

against steel. The Lombard's sword flashed in a circle that ended high above his own head. Robert, by moving his arms quickly, had deflected the heavy blade so that it passed harmlessly over his helmet.

Piculph recovered and smote again, straight down at the Englishman's head. Robert planted his feet and whirled up his blade, turning the other's aside and into the sand.

"Thy purse likes me well, Sir Curthose," cried the Hospitaller. "Ha—treachery!"

Near at hand his quick eye had distinguished one of the Lombards kneeling with a short battle mace drawn back to throw. In that elusive light the iron club might have been cast unseen, and at such short range it could not fail to reach the Longsword. Drawing his sword, the young knight ran at the front of the circle of men-at-arms; midway in a stride he faltered and flung up his arm.

A dagger, wielded by one he had passed, had struck fair into the side of his throat, and gasping, he sank on his knees, choking out his life. The quick movement had caught the eye of Robert, who cried out and sprang aside from Piculph.

"A deed most foul!" he grated through set teeth. "Montserrat—"

Picking out the man who had stabbed the knight and who was trying to work back into the throng, he slashed him full between neck and shoulder and used his point on the henchman who still balanced the mace.

"—, Montserrat, since when have you plied the trade of cutthroat? Ah, Piculph!"

Whirling to meet a fresh onset from the seneschal, Robert gave back the Lombard blow for blow, until the clashing of steel drowned the shouts of the aroused liegemen. Sweat gleamed on the Lombard's broad cheeks, and his breath labored as he exerted all his strength, fearing now for his life. Robert whipped his sword over the other's guard, and the edge of the blade thudded against Piculph's neck under the ear.

It struck upon the fold of the mail coif and glanced up, biting through the chain mail and stripped the end of the jaw-bone and the ear from the side of the man's head. The Lombard plunged down upon the sand, and Robert ran to his horse. The bay, trained to stand where he had been left, was in motion before the warrior had settled in the saddle.

An arrow whistled through the air, and

Robert put his horse to a trot, making the round of the circle once, seeking Guiblo, the Venetian. But Guiblo had withdrawn far into the ranks of his men, and Sir Curthose and many of the older liegemen stood their ground, unwilling to draw weapon against the man who had once been castellan of Antioch.

"What, my lord," Robert gibed, "do you lack of murderers? Then summon up your hunters and the hounds and so—fare well!"

He had reached one end of the irregular cleared space; now he wheeled the bay and raked its flanks with rowels. The charger leaped forward, gained pace, and the throng gave way in haste before horse and rider, permitting Longsword to pass through. He headed for the nearest gully amid the foot-hills, and the voice of the marquis roared after him.

"After him! A cap full of gold to the wight who brings him down."

The bay charger, wise and swift of foot, swung clear of the running men and gained the shadows of the rocks before the riders could draw near him. Guiblo, his swarthy cheeks pallid, stared down at the lifeless eyes of the young knight whose white cross was slowly obscured by a dark tide. Beside him was the hawking-gauntlet.

"A good plan," murmured the Venetian. "Aye—but three lie slain and a fourth maimed and another hunted by the liegemen, for so slight a thing as a ribald's glove."

CHAPTER IV

A fat hound does not hunt well.—Chinese Proverbs.

ROBERT had hunted a fleeing foeman too often not to know that a fugitive who rides blindly is soon overtaken or cut off. So he galloped up the twisting gully, scanning the ground on either hand and when he was barely within the shadow of the hills turned sharply to the left.

The bay pricked up its ears, braced its forefeet and half slid on its haunches down into the rocky bed of a dry watercourse. Here a stand of gnarled cedars hid them from view, and Robert was out of the saddle and holding the horse's muzzle before the last pebbles had stopped rolling.

His forehead was bleeding and his head was ringing from a glancing blow of the two-handed sword that had ripped off his helmet. And black bitterness clouded his

thoughts. To be baited like a buffoon at table, to be hunted over the glens like a runaway cut-purse! To be tricked by the man who no longer had use for his services!

True, he could endeavor to make his way to Cyprus, where the new king held court—Jerusalem being in the hands of the Saracens. There, however, the influence of the Montserrats and the Venetians would be at work against him, and a poniard in the back in some tavern or alley would make an end of him. As for raising his ransom in Palestine under the shadow of Hugo's enmity—that was out of the question.

If he escaped pursuit—and the people of Montserrat would spare no pains to silence the voice that might be raised against them in accusation of the murder of the Hospitaler—he must seek the road that led to the eastern mountain wall and there make-shift as best he could in the hills until the hue and cry had died away.

"And look ye, Sir Charger," he observed under his breath, "we do lack the services of squire and valeret, likewise of shield and helm and purse—which last is a sad matter, for we stand bound to garner us a many broad pieces of gold before the year is told. Yet hath the year still many moons, and we have been in a worse strait than this—*Holá*, softly, softly!"

Gripping the nostrils of the horse, he looked up as a rider plunged off the trail overhead, plowing recklessly through the sand until he reined to a sudden halt amid the cedars. And then came a new thudding of hoofs along the ridge and a clanking of steel. Men shouted back and forth and passed on, unseen. Neither Robert nor the stranger moved until the detachment had galloped out of hearing, and they were certain that no others followed.

"By Allah, do the Franks of this country never sleep? The gullies are a swarm with them, and I have all but broken my leg on these rocks. *Bi al-taubah*—they do me too much honor."

"Abdullah!"

Robert walked over to the minstrel.

"How came you from the castle?"

"The red-haired woman unbarred a gate for me. When you would enter a dwelling seek out for companion a man with a sword; when you would leave unseen, ask a woman. But honor is due first to Allah and then to you. I watched from the height and saw you cut down those who came against you.

Before that I observed you in the hall of the feasters, when the wine went the rounds and a woman would have smiled upon you. *Ohai*, my heart was cheered and I said to myself—

"There is one who hath the bearing of a *bahator*, a prince of warriors."

"Nay, these Franks do not search for you. They ride to seek me out."

"Wherefore?"

"To bind me and make an end of my doings."

Abdullah laughed, running his fingers through his beard.

"What is written is written, and who shall say otherwise? For I was sent hither to find among other things a Frank who was indeed a warrior, and to bring him back with me to my king."

"What lord is that?"

"The master of all men."

"His name and place?"

"Nay, in time you will know that as well as other things. We will ride to Khar, for I have come from there. Have you heart to cross the desert and scale the Iron Gates?"

Abdullah was silent a moment.

"The path is one of peril," he went on. "If you live to reach Khar you will never come back—to this. Whosoever ventures to Khar abides there. But this I can promise you; before the Summer is past you will behold a mighty warring of peoples, and a treasure uncovered. Of this you shall claim a share that will suffice to build a castle like yonder hold and fill it with a thousand slaves and as many steeds——"

Robert smote the stallion's saddle softly with his fist.

"Words—words!"

The breath of the minstrel hissed through his lips.

"I read you not aright if you are one to seek *talsmins* and surety for a venture such as this. Yet if you fear, turn aside now. I have seen the Iron Gates crush a trembler——"

"Faith!"

The knight gripped Abdullah's shoulder. "Wherever you dare set foot, I would go beyond you."

"Oh-o-ho!"

Abdullah rocked with inward mirth, as at a huge joke.

"The young cub growls—the fledgling lifts its beak. *Ohai—hail!*"

"Mount then and show the path. For I will adventure with you into paynimry."

"Aye, *bunayyi*, little son. The young warrior would level his spear at an elephant! O most darling fool; had I a son he would be like you, yet wiser. Think ye, Nazarene, I will not betray you at the first Moslem village beyond the hills?"

"Nay, for you are no Moslem."

In the deep gloom under the trees Abdullah leaned closer to peer into his companion's eyes.

"How? What words are these?"

"And you were not always a minstrel. Though you carry a prayer rug, Abdullah, you have no use for it. I have not seen you pray the *namaz gar*, and in the castle you shared forbidden wine and meat."

Abdullah was silent for a full minute, pondering this.

"Then you think I am *atabeg* of the Kharemsian raiders?"

"Not so. For you warned the baron of their approach, and you did not seek them when you won free of the castle."

"True, O father of ravens. Had I led the raiders I would have stormed the Nazarene hold, for there was a woman more to be desired than the white-faced maid of the pilgrims—and a lord to be held for ransom."

The minstrel paused to take the saddle from the stallion and let him roll in the sand, though it meant risk for himself.

"Many things have I seen, O youth, but not this thing—that a babbler of secrets lived to be white of hair. Remember that I am Abdullah, the teller of tales, no more."

"Then we ride alone—we twain?"

"Not alone."

Abdullah laughed softly.

"Upon our road we shall have a brave company. Your Iskander and the hero Rustam—aye, and one of the Cæsars of Rome—will be our road companions. They who died, seeking the treasure of the Throne of Gold, which we may seize and keep."

Leaning on his sword, Longsword listened in silence. The minstrel could have said nothing better suited to his mood. Robert never hesitated over a decision, and when he felt that he could trust Abdullah he thought no more about it.

Meanwhile the minstrel was busied about his saddle-bags.

"And if we die," he muttered into his beard, "we will spread such a carpet of

slain about us that men will not forget our names. O Nazarene, you may not venture beyond the hills without a name, and garments to fit. *Hai*, you are dark enough in the skin to pass for an Egyptian, being lighter than the Arabs. You speak the language easily—yet not like an Arab. So you must be a Lion of Egypt: Alp Arslan, the sword slayer, the cloud-scattering, the diamond sheen of all warriors—the Ameer Alp Arslan. And remember to pray the *namaz gar*," he added under his breath.



PRESENTLY Robert stood in changed garments. Abdullah had cast away the knight's surcoat and mailed thigh-pieces, sleeves and mittens. From his pack he had produced a loin cloth, baggy cotton trousers and slippers. Over the youth's mail he had slipped a flowing *khalat* of silk and bound it in at the waist with a shawl, working skilfully in the dark. Lastly he gave Robert a light Saracen steel headgear with peak and nasal and mailed drop that hung about ears and shoulders.

"The horse and saddle may pass for spoil taden from the Nazarenes," he pronounced, "likewise the long sword. In the first village we will seek out a barber, and when he has shaved your head and mouth we will cut him open lest he talk too much. What now?"

Robert stooped and found his gold spurs on the ground. Feeling about for a large boulder in the gully, he put forth his strength and rolled it aside. Then, dropping the spurs in the hollow, he thrust back the stone upon them.

"So that no other may wear them," he said calmly. "For here doth Sir Robert, castellan of Antioch, end his days; and from here doth Robert the Wayfarer step forth."



TAKING advantage of the dawn mists, they worked out of the foothills into a cattle path known to Robert, and sunrise found them well away from the castle. Avoiding the main road to the east, they climbed steadily until they were past the line of the Montserrat watch towers, Abdullah remarking grimly that the warders of the marquis would pay little attention to two Moslem riders when they were seeking a fugitive of their own race upon whose head a reward had been placed.

Here they turned back into the trail that had been taken by the raiders, as they

judged from the hoof-marks. Abdullah started to give the stallion his head when he swerved in the saddle and reined in sharply. An arrow whistled between them, and another shaft grazed Robert's ear as he urged his horse forward.

Crashing into the underbrush, he drew his sword and slashed at a tamarisk bush behind which a man was crouched. The archer turned to flee, but caught his foot and fell headlong. Robert swung from his stirrups and stood over him, surprised to see that it was the lanky bowman who had marched with the pilgrims. The man snarled up at him, unarmed—for his bow had fallen from his hand.

Robert sheathed the long sword and signed to Abdullah to do the man no hurt. The bowman must have thought them stragglers of the raiders, and Robert had no desire to make himself known, until he noticed a handsome pony with a Moslem saddle tethered to a near-by tree.

"Which way went the raiders from Khar?" he asked in English, for Abdullah desired to avoid the path taken by the foray. "You have one of their horses, methinks."

The bowman sat up, his close-set eyes agleam with hatred and suspicion.

"Aye, that have I, Saracen. And no aid wilt thou have from me to find the unshriven dogs, thy companions. Ha, by token of that long sword and high horse thou hast slain a Christian knight that did bespeak me a day ago upon the road to Jordan."

He spat on the ground in front of Robert and sprang to his feet, palpably astonished that he should have been left alive so long.

His tousled red hair stood up from his freckled skin, and the shagreen hood upon his bony shoulders was rent by thorns, so it barely concealed the greasy leather jerkin beneath. His thin face was defiant.

"Heave up thy hacker, Moslem, and make an end—for Will Bunsley o' Northumberland will ask no mercy from a black-avised knave. Had I my good long bow I'd spit me the twain of ye. Ah, that I would. This lewd Moslem bow, seest thou, carries wide o' the mark."

He kicked contemptuously at the short Moslem bow with its looping arch and silk cord that lay near at hand. In some way he had lost his own weapon and had found him another, less satisfactory. And his fail-

ure to bring down the two riders seemed to irk him deeply.

"Nay," Robert smiled, "the feathers of your shaft tickled my ear. And that is close enough."

"Close, quotha!" the bowman sneered. "Why, lookee, my rogue—with my yew bow I'd split thee thy forehead fair and featly at fifty paces."

His jaw dropped, and he fell back a pace.

"St. Dunstan be my aid! Thou art the knight himself in paynim garb. Aye, that yellow hair—"

He scratched his head, looking from Robert to Abdullah suspiciously.

"And I would have slain thee in quittance of my revenge."

"Your revenge, bowman?"

"Ah. Three lives I seek of the Saracens that fell upon our company, to wit: One for the blind priest, good Father Evagrius, that they carried off to torture; another for the maid Ellen that they seized and bound upon a horse—may they sup in purgatory, may their tongues rot out and the kites beak their eyes!"

"And the third?"

"I vowed to St. Dunstan to feather me a shaft in the losel that smote me a dour ding upon the sconce."

Will Bunsley rubbed a lump on his skull ruefully.

"Aye, a knavish clout it were on this my mazzard."

"Tell me the story of the affray."

Robert sheathed his sword slowly. He had thought all the pilgrims slain, but here was news of two taken captive.

"Affray, quotha!"

The archer shook his head.

"Nay, 'twas a shambles and we the sheep."

The surprise, he explained, had been complete, for the pilgrims thought themselves safe on the Montserrat lands. The raiders must have been concealed in the gullies near the river, and they rode into the camp plying their bows on all sides. Those who stood up to them were shot down before sword or pike could be used, and Bunsley had barely time to string his bow before he saw the patriarch and the girl snatched up and placed on one of the horses.

He sent a shaft into one of the riders and ran after the captives, who were led away at once. Before he reached them he had been struck down by a club or mace from behind, and when he came to his senses the

slaughter was over. After washing his head in the river he was able to catch a riderless pony that was circling the camp.

Without delaying Bunsley had set forth on the trail taken by the raiders. This was before the coming of the Montserrat men, and he pushed up into the mountains, becoming weary and confused on the descent, until he dismounted and sought some sleep, being awakened by the tread of Abdullah's horse. The Moslem bow he had picked up when he left the camp.

"And if thou be'st true man, thou wilt seek out the infidel dogs and prevail upon them to release the maid and priest. If not, then for love of the Cross thou didst wear, bear me company until we come up with them."

"You would not go far, bowman."

Robert liked the stubborn courage of the yeoman, yet knew that Bunsley would not live to see the sun set if he kept on as he planned.

"Turn back and seek service with the Montserrat, who hath an eye for a man who pulls a good bow."

"Nay, I'll seek no service with him. Ah, he is too glib with promises and too sparing of deeds. 'Tis a good lass and loves me well."

Bunsley heaved a deep sigh.

"What says the redbeard?" asked Abdullah.

Robert explained, and the minstrel studied the archer curiously.

"Take me with thee, lord," Bunsley begged doggedly, "and, God willing, I'll cry a greeting to the lass and strike a blow for her ere she be lost to Christian folk."

The girl, he added eagerly, was no more than a child when, a year and more ago, she had listened to the preaching of the monk de Courçon in Blois, where Bunsley happened to be stationed. She was Ellen d'Ibelin, daughter of a knight, and she had had schooling with the nuns.

At Blois she took the Cross with many youths and children, for the monk declared that Jerusalem might be delivered by the children. Will Bunsley fell under the spell of the crusade preacher—also he confessed to a mighty fondness for the girl—and adventured with the pilgrims through many barren and hostile lands to Byzantium.

"And 'tis gold I seek," cried Robert. "Nor will I turn me aside for any maid, captive though she be."

It irked him that the men from Khar should have borne off prisoners from the lands of the *Croises*, and he spoke bitterly, for his warning to Hugo and to the pilgrims had gone unheeded. Having formed a purpose, he would not swerve from it. Moreover the red archer was the last man he wished to take with him on his venture. It was impossible to disguise that raw-boned figure and stentorian voice; yet to leave Will Bunsley to follow the trail alone—

"I'll tend the horses, good my lord," insisted the yeoman, "and draw thee wine at every inn, aye, and keep watch o' nights for slit-throats—"

"Ho!" Robert chuckled. "Fare with us then, an' you will. If my companion—"

But Abdullah gave his assent without ado. The redbeard, he said, could go as he was, and they would claim that he was Robert's captive. So should the Ameer Arslan have more honor. Bunsley's appearance would be enough to make the Arabs, through whose country they must pass, think him a simpleton, afflicted by Allah.

Clearly Robert explained to the yeoman the hardships they would face, first in the desert, then in the heart of Moslem power. But Will Bunsley merely grinned—although he grimaced when told he must cast aside his weapons to play the part of captive.

"Ha, for the land of gold—and the fair damsels of paynimry. How sayeth the song?"

He chanted in a tuneful roar—

"Though I have a man i-slaw
And forfeited the king's law,
I shall guiden a man of law,
Will take my penny and let me go."

Robert harkened with relish to an English voice, yet felt grave misgiving at taking the archer, thinking that the man could not survive for many days. Before long, however, Will Bunsley of Northumberland proved to be a man of many surprises.

Although Abdullah pushed forward at a furious pace, the archer kept up with his nag, grumbling and groaning, but never allowing the two wanderers out of sight. The heat and the scanty fare stretched the skin taut on his bones, and he came to look like a scarlet skeleton, so that when they stopped at a village, the men of the desert thronged to stare at the red Frank captive in astonishment.

Robert noticed that the minstrel rode in a strange fashion with a longer stirrup than the Arabs and with his weight eased well forward. He picked his course by the stars—for they covered most of their way at night. Robert had a habit of watching the constellations and judged by the position of the Great Bear that they were working steadily east. The Milky Way—which Abdullah called the Path of the Wild Geese—was directly overhead as they dropped down into a country of baked clay, where the tents of the desert tribes were no longer to be seen.

Here when the moon waned they crossed by swimming a sluggish, reed-bordered river that Abdullah called the Frat and Robert thought was the Euphrates. It was well for the knight that long years in the saddle had hardened him for such a journey. Abdullah seemed to be made of iron, and Will Bunsley, ever on the lookout for traces of the raiders whom they followed, moaned and cursed with the weariness of the saddle and the plaguing of midges and huge flies.

Abdullah had bartered in a Kurd village another pony for the archer and Bunsley changed saddle from one to the other, complaining bitterly that it was a sin to ask one man to do the work of two nags. Yet the hope of coming up with the men from Khar kept him from falling behind. Once they passed around a hamlet of merchants on the river that had been sacked and burned by the raiders, and Robert waxed thoughtful at seeing that the riders from Khar took spoil from Moslem and Christian alike. But in those days upon the desert floor he gave little heed to aught but the necessity for keeping pace with the minstrel, who rode recklessly through the night, and while the two Nazarenes slept, utterly wearied in the mid-day hours, played softly upon his lute and sang in a guttural speech that Robert had never heard before.

And this flight across a strange and barren land did much to ease the bitterness that had been in Robert. They hunted where they could and avoided the villages, and daily covered stretches that the crusader would not have thought possible. So the three rode from Palestine, one seeking the price of his life, another searching for a captive girl and the third intent on keeping a rendezvous with his master, whose name he would not reveal.

Unexpectedly, late one afternoon, they

came to a muddy stream swift running between low, sandy banks—the boundary line of Khar, Abdullah said; and, pointing to clusters of skin tents on the far bank where some hundred horses were turned loose to graze, he added—

“The riders from Khar.”

CHAPTER V

THE REDBEARD

IT WAS too late to go back out of sight, for watchers on the other bank had seen them, and their horses were too weary to escape pursuit. Hesitation would have been fatal, and Robert urged his horse into the river, to be followed promptly by the minstrel.

Once they had climbed out on the sand drifts they were surrounded by dark-skinned warriors in silvered helmets—lean, slow-moving men who swaggered in crimson and white kaftans and polished hauberks, who took in every detail of the newcomers' steeds and trappings at a single glance and bared their teeth at Bunsley—who returned their scowls with interest.

“Kankalis, these,” whispered Abdullah meaningly, “hillmen, Turkomans and the best of the light cavalry of the master of Khar—our companions on the road to the Iron Gates, O Arslan. Be wily in talk, O Egyptian, and think before each word. Do not try to aid the redbear if they seek him out for sport for their long knives.”

Two mounted warriors who had been posted at the river pushed in between the strangers and the crowd, heedless of the insults hurled at them by those who were jostled by the ponies. Commanding Robert to follow, they conducted the three to a large tent where sat the leader of the band—an old man with a beak of a nose, his sword girdled high on his middle. He knelt on a silk carpet, casting knuckle-bones idly, and though he appeared scarcely to notice the strangers he looked them over carefully.

Abdullah related the tale agreed upon, that he, a minstrel wandering from Khar, had fallen in with an ameer out of Cairo who journeyed to the court of the Throne of Gold, and with him one Nazarene, a captive taken in the valley of the Orontes. Inalzig Khan, as the leader of the Kankalis was called, did not see fit to ask them to sit as yet, although they had dismounted.

"Where are your followers, O valiant lion," he demanded of Robert ironically.

"Ask the kites and the wolves. They were slain in affrays with the Nazarenes and the Bedawans."

"Allah, can it be so? What do you seek of me?"

"Guidance and protection through the Iron Gates."

The khan bared long teeth in a mocking smile.

"Nay, you know not the Gates. Who can protect a stranger who lacks the right to enter?"

Knowing that a display of temper was expected of him, at this, Robert touched his sword-hilt.

"By the ninety and nine holy names, does a son of the Seljuks and a great-grandson of a caliph take grass between his teeth to bespeak a gatekeeper?"

Months of dwelling with the nobles of Cairo enabled him to imitate the mincing temper of a high-born Egyptian; with his mustache and head shaven and his bare feet blackened by the sun of the plains, he had little to fear. Yet Inalzig was not satisfied, although his tone became more courteous.

"Upon what mission do you ride to the Shah, O Cairene?"

Abdullah threw in carelessly, as if explaining to a friend—

"None leave the *Sialak*, the Gates, or enter to the great city except they go or come upon an order of Muhammad Shah—on whom be peace—the Emperor of Khar and the shield of Islam."

"Does the jackal ask of the wolf, 'Why are ye here?'" Robert took his cue. "I will speak of my mission to the governor of the great city, and to you, Inalzig Khan, I say—" he thought swiftly—"that the Sultans of Cairo and Damietta have withstood the Nazarenes and send word of their deeds to Muhammad Shah."

The Kankali nodded without emotion, and made room for the twain on the carpet.

"*Hamaian*—contentment be upon you, O ameer. I care naught for such matters, being sent on a foray to fetch a quota of maidens and spoil from the accursed Nazarenes and the desert tribes. If you can pass the Gates you will have fair greeting in Bokhara, the city of which I spoke. For the Shah draws his sword and mounts for war."

"With whom?" demanded Abdullah with sudden interest.

"*Mashallah*—have I been within the walls of Bokhara this last year, that I should know? Some tribe of unbelievers from the north dares to withstand the emperor."

Will Bunsley had been staring about eagerly at the piles of wicker baskets holding the fruits of the foray, and certain tents set apart for the captives, without seeing any sign of the girl or the priest.

"It is my wish," remarked the chief of the Kankalis, leaning back on his cushions, "that the infidel be stripped and bound and stretched out for some of my men to try the edge of their simitars. Is it not written that he who causes the death of an unbeliever will not fail of paradise?"

A glance from Abdullah warned Robert that this request was not to be lightly refused. The khan had halted his men for a day's rest, and a curious throng had gathered about the archer, who had forgotten to mumble and gape as usual.

"It would bring ill fortune upon us to slay him, O captain of many," objected Robert, heedless of the minstrel's concern.

"How?"

"He is *djinn*-infested. The devil of madness is in him."

Inalzig signed for a slave to bring wine-cups and shook his head indifferently.

"I am no servant of the priests and herder of the afflicted of Allah. The Frank could not pass the Gates, so why weary two horses in bearing him thither?"

"Do you see the color of his hair and skin?"

"Aye, red as heart of fire."

"When a man is blind, what is the color of his eyes?"

"White." *

"True. Allah hath set his seal on the eyes. Now when the devil entered this man, his skin turned red. Verily, it is a strange devil. The infidel, being mad, believes that he can overthrow any warrior with all weapons. *Yah ahmak*, the simpleton will bring mirth to your heart."

"Allah!"

The Kankali smiled and sipped at his cup. "Let us see what he does. Nay, do not give him a bow—" as Robert reached for one in a corner of the tent—"for the — might send the shaft this way. Let him try his skill with a spear, a stabbing-spear."

Robert glanced at Bunsley and risked speaking to the archer.

*Owing to the almost inevitable cataract.

"Canst withstand one of these fellows with a quarterstaff?"

"Aye, by all the saints, that can I, lord brother."

The yeoman grinned cheerfully.

"Last Martinmas I won a silver shilling for a bout——"

"The Moslem will have a long stabbing-spear, and he will not stop at the first blood. You stand in dire peril, Master Will, and it will go hard if you do not prevail."

The archer declared that he would hold his own with anything on two legs at brawling or dicing and desired nothing better than to crack the skulls of his tormentors.

"The fool," Robert explained to the Kankali, "will think that a stout stick is a spear, so let him have one. Yet if he is victor, will you permit him to ride with me unharmed?"

"Verily," laughed the warrior, who was studying Robert curiously. "Have you also a devil that you speak the language of the infidel?"

"He dwelt at their court for a year and more," put in Abdullah quickly, "and learned much of their ways. For this was he chosen to ride to the Shah with his story."

Saying that it was all one to him and that he fancied there were three fools instead of one at his tent, Inalzig called for one of his men to stand forth with a spear. A thin warrior with a huge, knotted turban stepped into the cleared space, carrying a five-foot weapon. Will Bunsley cast about until he found a spare tent-pole of teak as long as he was tall and as large around as his two thumbs joined together.

Tossing up the staff, he caught it in the fingers of one hand and twirled it around his head. Then, setting his long legs, he gripped the quarterstaff with both hands widely separated, well in front of him. To the on-lookers this seemed the merest bombast, and the eyes of the Kankali glittered as he advanced on the archer and thrust at Bunsley's ribs, meaning to wound the red man a few times before killing him. Instead the yeoman warding the blow by lowering one end of his pole. Again the Kankali thrust with no better result.

Angered by the gibes of his companions, the spearman shortened his grasp and feinted, minded to end the matter out of hand. But Will halted him abruptly by bringing up one arm and jabbing wickedly at the throat. Choking, the Kankali stag-

gered back and the yeoman smote him on either ear so quickly that the two thuds sounded as one.

Blood flowed down the warrior's jaw, and he rocked dizzily, then crumpled down on the sand.

"The fool is strong in the arm," observed Inalzig. "Now we will try his skill."

He barked an order, and a stocky warrior sprang out from the growing throng of watchers. The khan tossed him a javelin—a throwing-spear no more than a yard long with a small, barbed point.

"Send him to *jehannum* or taste a hundred lashes."

Robert, who had watched English yeomen practising with the quarterstaff in Antioch, had known that Will could make a long spear look ridiculous, but a javelin was not to be warding so easily. Nor could he come to the archer's aid, for such a move would mean drawn weapons and a swift end for them both.

But Will, watching his adversary keenly, yelped cheerfully.

"So-ho, here be a dog with sharp teeth, so give heed, Master Robert, to some pretty work."

Leaping about in front of the Kankali, he whirled the quarterstaff in the man's eyes until the warrior decided that the Frank was not going to attack, and launched the javelin. Will, having waited for just this, dodged alertly, and the short spear did no more than glance from one shoulder, cutting it to the bone.

The warrior snarled and drew a curved dagger. Rushing in, he slashed at the archer's ribs, only to drop like a log and lie where he had fallen. Will had stepped aside and slid one hand down to the other, swinging lustily with the full weight of the staff upon the Kankali's skull.

"Now St. Dunstan send that he be the one that cracked my pate in the battle," he remarked.

To the Moslems his skill with the staff savored of the marvelous, for they were men who used none but edged weapons. Even the khan was stirred to interest and asked if the red man could do tricks with anything but a stick.

"Put a bow into his hands and set the best of your archers against him," suggested Robert.

After some hesitation Inalzig agreed and had one of the short Turkish bows brought

out for Will, who took it with misgivings, saying that it might do to use from a horse's back but was no thing to tickle the fancy of a Northumberland lad. He selected his arrows with care, choosing the longest he could find."

Thus equipped he outdid the best of the Kankalis, who withdrew from the contest with as much dignity as they could muster, explaining loudly that the Frank was surely *djinn*-infested. Indeed Will was strutting about with a lop-sided grin, for he had more than his share of vanity. Inalzig had fallen into a rage and nursed his wine-cup sullenly until Abdullah, who had followed the archery with mild interest, arose and declared that he had come from a country where men used bows otherwise.

"Then put the fool to shame, O minstrel," grunted the chief.

"Nay," responded the minstrel, "I lack his skill, yet have I learned a trick that your men know not."

Taking a small turban cloth, he walked to the nearest tree. Rolling the cotton strip tightly, he wrapped it around the bole of the tree so that a strip some two fingers in breadth showed white against the dark trunk.

Then, calling for a saddled pony, he chose a short powerful bow and a quiver with six arrows. Mounting and riding off, he wheeled the pony some two hundred paces from his mark and set it to a gallop. One after the other he loosed three shafts rapidly as he rode, gripping the ends of the arrows between thumb and forefinger.

Abreast the tree Abdullah swiftly unstrung the bow and used the flying cord on his pony as a whip. Then, stringing it taut again, he emptied his quiver as he drew away from the mark. It was no easy feat to loose the shafts over the pony's rump, and the Kankalis raised a shout of gratification when it was seen that all but one of Abdullah's arrows had struck the bole of the tree, and three were within the cotton band.

"Such nimble finger work is not our way," remarked Will, studying the hits made by the minstrel, "for we pull a long bow and draw each shaft to the head. Yet no man can say Will Bunsley gave ground to him in honest yeoman sport."

The warriors crowded closer when they saw that the Frank would attempt to equal the minstrel's feat. They had been weaned

from boyhood with bows in their hands, but like Abdullah were accustomed to shoot from the saddle.

Will signed for the bow Abdullah used to be brought him, and again selected a half-dozen arrows. Instead of standing, he knelt this time about a hundred yards from the trees and stuck the heads of the arrows lightly in the sand in a half-circle under his right hand. After testing the pull of the new bow, he thumbed the silk string and fitted an arrow, holding it in place between his first and second fingers which gripped the string. He let it fly and caught up another deftly. His long arms worked smoothly, and he set his jaw stubbornly.

It seemed to Robert that two arrows were in the air at once as his eye followed the first to the mark before looking for the second. When the last shaft was sped he shouted approval. Although Will had not tried his skill from a saddle, he had bettered Abdullah's hits. All the arrows were in the tree and four in the white band.

"Good!" grunted Inalzig. "The fool may live if he can; and it will be your turn, O ameer, to think of a trick when we stand at the Gates."

CHAPTER VI

THE WORD ON THE ROCKS

ROBERT frequently pondered the warning of the khan as they made their way at a rapid pace through the wooded uplands that lay beyond the river. And he had other things to think about.

To Will's chagrin there was no sign of the maid or the priest in the raiding-party; nor would Abdullah give them any word of the fate of the captives. The minstrel fell into a moody silence, broken only by his harsh songs sometimes at evening when they lay at ease in the tent openings and listened to the gambling and gossip of the Kankalis.

Abdullah became impatient at any delay—though these were few, because each day brought Inalzig fresh tidings of impending warfare and the chief was anxious to reach his destination, Bokhara, as quickly as possible.

"The maid and the monk live yet," he assured Robert, "and it may fortune that you will see them again. But who can foretell what the turn in the road will bring?

By the host of the dead! Only fools prophesy before the event!"

He studied the face of the young warrior as a wise man might read a book, sheet by sheet. And the finely wrought lips and candid gray eyes made him shake his head.

"Nay, you pray as a Moslem, and you walk as one—a little slowly—and you sit the saddle like a Seljuk and an ameer, but your eyes and mouth say otherwise. Why, by the white horse of Kaidu, do your thoughts dwell on a Christian child, scarce a woman?"

Robert merely nodded at Will Bunsley, who jogged ahead on his nag, heedless of the inevitable dust-cloud and the midges that swarmed about his eyes.

"Ha, the redbeard!" Abdullah smiled. "A skilled bowman and a man without fear. Yet he rides on a vain quest with room in his skull for no more than the idea that brought him forth. Allah, do we draw rein again!"

He shaded his eyes to gaze where Inalzig had halted the head of the column to let a string of camels pass. They were racing Bactrians, and the riders jeered at the weary ponies of the Kankalis. Robert, who had an eye for weapons and the men who bore them, observed that the camel-riders wore splendid, silvered mail under black khalats, that their targets were bossed with gold and their voluminous turbans crested with peacock feathers.

"Warriors of the Caliphs of Bagdad," muttered Abdullah under his mustache. "Mark the white camel of the leader. Ha, it will be a great war if the caliphs are sending men to the Shah. Verily the Moslems are gathering their might, like a leopard crouching to spring."

On other days they sighted detachments of furtive hillmen, who kept well away from Inalzig's standard, and horsemen mounted on splendid Arabs, who raised the shrill ululation of the Saracens at sight of friends. These were heading through the villages, tending in the same direction as Inalzig, which was toward a line of blue summits that rose each day a little higher upon the horizon, with one great peak bearing a snow cap standing upon the travelers' right hand.*

*The route taken by the crusader and his companions was not known to Europeans in that age. From the few landmarks observed, they must have crossed the Euphrates near Aleppo and the Tigris a little south of what is now Mosul, entering modern Persia within the next few days by the highlands of Kurdistan. The snow mountain must have been Demavend, some two days' ride northeast of Teheran. The Sialak Pass is today just as it was then—or as it was in Alexander's day, for that matter.

"To the Iron Gates," Abdullah nodded. "All who ride to Khar from the west must pass the Gates and give surety to the warders of their purpose. These arrays are no more than the outlying detachments, bound for the main armies at the great cities."

"I had thought them a mighty force," observed Robert.

Abdullah smiled.

"The puppy thought the jackal was a wolf! Nay, the master of the Throne of Gold hath five times a hundred thousand riders to his command."

This, Robert fancied a jest, for such numbers were incredible. In Palestine the host of the crusaders amounted to no more than fifteen thousand.

"If the red archer," quoth Abdullah, his eyes gleaming, "would see vengeance at work, he has come in good time. Aye, he shall see what will fill his eyes. And you, O young warrior, will taste the mead of a man." With that he urged his horse up close to the heels of a pair of Kankalis until the dust nearly choked them and hid the rest of the detachment somewhat from view. Thrusting out his hand suddenly, the minstrel gripped Robert's fingers and when he drew away something hard and cold was in the knight's hand. Realizing that he was not to attract attention to himself, Robert did not look down for a moment. When he did so, he recognized within his fingers the chain of rubies that Abdullah had carried, carved in the semblance of roses.

"Place it within thy girdle," whispered the minstrel, "and show it only at the Sialak. The *talsmin* will pass you through."

He glanced about and reined closer.

"You will have need of all your wit if you live to reach Bokhara. Remember that no Kharemsian has proof against you, and you are fairly safe if you do not betray yourself—so beware of tricks. Remember, too, that it is ever best to face forward and to shun no risk. The Moslems are a folk of many tribes and quarrels—and that is their bane. If a man mocks you, cut him down; if a spy is sent, laugh at him. By all the gods, I have not brought you so far, to find you a weakling!"

Robert reflected that a good Moslem does not swear by more than one god.

"And you?" he asked.

"Whatever happens, I will seek you out

in Bokhara. *Ya bunnayi*—O little son, to-morrow we climb the *Sialak*."

In the minstrel's dark eyes was something like concern for the youth who, towering half a head above him, he addressed as his little son. Yet when these words had passed he withdrew into his cloak of silence and sat for hours on his saddle cloth without turning hand to his lute or lifting his voice in song. And that night the heat of the plains was tempered just a bit by a long breeze from the north.

Robert sniffed it as he lay outstretched on his cloak, studying the canopy of stars, and though he thought surely it must be fancy, the breeze seemed to bear with it the tang of the salt sea and wet rocks.

They made a long stretch the next day, and Bunsley complained that the Moslems hemmed him in as if he were part of the treasure of loot they were guarding. Other caravans made way for Inalzig's standard, and all through the day they drew nearer to a line of peaks that had lifted from the skyline two sunrises before.

The wind whipped and buffeted them as they ate their rice and dates and mutton that evening in the very shadow of bare slopes that flung back the red glory of the sunset. Robert had studied the line of mountains carefully, to pick out the pass that might let them through; he had seen cavalades of hurrying riders sweep up to one point in the foot-hills and immediately pass from view.

When the last shaft of red light vanished from the tallest of the peaks—the one streaked with tiny spots of something that gave back the glitter of the sun—darkness settled like a cloak upon the *serais* where the caravans had halted for the night. The smoke of the dung fires was not to be seen, and the glow of the flames spread upon bearded faces and lines of picketed beasts.

This was the signal for Inalzig to order his men to saddle again, and four of them came and grinned at the two Franks before ranging themselves on either side. They went forward at a trot until a line of camels, grunting protest at the night march, slowed them to a hand pace.

So strong was the illusion of darkness that Robert felt that they were entering the breast of the hills. High rock walls closed in on them presently. By the echo of the hoofs on stones he judged that the cliffs were sheer and immense. When torches

appeared ahead of him, he found that he could not begin to see the top of the cañon walls.

At places great boulders encroached on the narrow pass, leaving no more than a bridle way. The muffled voices and the uproar of the camels ahead sent the echoes leaping from side to side, to diminish to whispers drowned by the gusts of wind.

"Master Robert," quoth Will, "did the minstrel say that we would fall in with a company of dead lords, and ride with King Cæsar and roguish Alexander—ha, St. Dunstan aid us!"

The echoes caught up his words and shouted them to the sky—

"Alexander—Alexander—aid us—aid!"

"Methinks this is the place."

Will lowered his voice to a whisper. And—

"Methinks this is—the place—the place!"

The wind-borne whisper passed overhead. Will fell to pattering what prayers he could muster on the moment, mixed with lusty curses on the paynims who had led him into such a stronghold of demons. The cliffs repeated back his mutterings, and garbled the curses with the prayers so that presently he fell into a gloomy silence. The way twisted interminably, and they had to edge past the camels, which had been halted at one side while their riders, apparently, went forward. The ponies shied at the smell of the gaunt beasts, and presently the word came back to dismount.

As he pressed after the torches that flared and smoked in the gusts of air, Robert noticed that he was splashing through cold water. Reaching down one hand, he discovered that a cut on his forefinger smarted keenly; and, tasting the water, he found it salt.

Will merely shook his head when this was called to his attention.

"Aye, tall brother," he pointed out, "where water is salt, there a sea must be. What sea lies within the desert—save the Styx? Nay, we will sup wi' Satan and bed down wi' the ghosts this night. Seest thou yonder writing? How reads it?"

Glancing where the yeoman's finger pointed, Robert noticed first the portion of a ruined wall stretching athwart the pass, then a row of characters carved in the side of the cliff some distance over his head. The words were not Latin or Arabic, and he could make nothing of them; but a

stalwart Kankali at his heels noticed his interest and enlightened him.

"'Tis but one word, O Cairene and that is—

"'Victory.'"

"How old is the word?"

"Am I a prophet, that I should know? Some say it was carved so by the men of the hero Iskander in the elder days, when news came to him of the death of his foe the lord of Parthia.* But now leave your horse and climb, for these are the Gates."

Robert looked ahead and found that Will was already scrambling up what seemed to be a solid wall of rock, in reality a mass of boulders, up which the Kankalis were swarming. Whether the rocks had been piled there or had fallen from above, Robert cared little. So steep was the ascent that he was forced to use hands and knees, and water trickled down on his shoulders as he pulled himself up to where a line of men were standing with torches.

This proved to be the crest of the natural rampart, and the knight saw that a score of bowmen placed here could hold back an army. The wind smote him full force and staggered him. A spearman reached out an arm and steadied him, thrusting him beside Will, facing the leader of the guards.

On the other side the boulders fell away to the dark surface of water, and Robert suspected that the stream flowing down the gorge had been penned back by the wall of rocks, forming a pool on the upper side. He was surprised to observe a number of women ranged beside the defenders of the pass—veiled women, variously garbed, but all slender and long-haired, unmistakably youthful. He noticed, too, that the Kankalis had passed on save for Inalzig, who stood beside the captain of the warders.

Abdullah was not to be seen, although Will stared about hopefully.

"Would I had a good yew staff at hand!" the archer sighed. "Aye, to make the sign of the cross, and so— Ha, look below!"

Near the surface of the water they saw a white face surrounded by a mesh of dark hair, and—in the glow of the torches—the silk clad limbs of a woman moving gently with the currents of the pool. A moment more and she sank out of sight, but Will stared wide-eyed at the spot.

"You are from Egypt?" a courteous voice questioned the knight. "And alone—yet

* Darius.

sent by the lords of Cairo? Verily, riders are coming from the far ends of the earth to the Throne of Gold. A strange sword!"

The speaker was a handsome Moslem, who made a respectful salaam and studied Robert with unwilling admiration.

"I had it from an unbeliever—who died," responded the knight quietly.

"And from the lords who sent you, O ameer—have you a token or a written word?"

"The word is—victory. The swords of the faithful have scattered the host of the Franks, and the day of the unbeliever in Jerusalem is at an end."

"*Mashallah!* So, too, will the Protector of the Faith, the King of the Age, of Time and the Tide, smite the other infidels who dared to mount for war upon the northern border. And your token, O captain of men?"

Robert drew the chain of rubies from his girdle, and the chief of the guards glanced at Inalzig curiously. Others craned their heads to look at the miniature roses threaded on gold.

"Where had you that?" demanded the Kankali, frowning.

"From one who brooks no questioning of his messengers, and who has a whip for a churlish slave," hazarded the knight, aware that this was a reasonably good characterisation of any Moslem noble.

"Upon whom be peace," assented the officer. "Well do I know the ruby chain that is a token given by the King of kings, the Shah of shahs, the favored of Allah, the sword arm of the faithful, Alai ud-deen Mohammad, master of Khar. Aye, this token he gives to the *anis-al-jalis*, the favorites, the cup companions of his hours of pleasure.

He bowed profoundly.

"And the ruby chain admits whoever bears it to the Gates, but no more than one. Yet it is passing strange, O favored of the Shah, that you, who have not passed this way going from Bokhara, should have the chain when you enter the inner country of Khar."

Robert glanced at the chain with some interest and returned it to his girdle. Then he turned suddenly on the Moslem.

"O brother to a parrot, O pack-saddle of an ass—"

He had learned a fair flood of forcible insults during his captivity, and he called

upon his memory for a full minute while the spearmen gaped, and the officer began to look doubtful.

"Another question," he ended, "and I will open thy breast to see if water or blood be in thy veins."

So indeed might a noble of Cairo have spoken to one who stood in his way, and it was clear to the warders that the Ameer Arslan would like nothing better than to make good his words with sword-strokes. Inalzig's eyes blazed, and unseen by Robert he made a sign to men who stood back by the cliff.

"If the Caliphs themselves rode out of Bagdad to join the Shah," he snarled, "the keeper of the Gate would cast them into the pool if they gave not a good account of themselves as Moslems. Look yonder!"

Robert did not turn, but Will Bunsley yelped like a hound viewing its quarry.

"Now praise be to all the saints and martyrs! Here be the *demoiselle* of Ibelin and Father Evagrius!"

Running to the ledge of rock that served as a pathway back from the buttress on which they stood, he tried to cast himself on his knees and seize the edge of the girl's robe to kiss. A spear-butt planted in his ribs by an alert guard sent him sprawling.

Ellen d'Ibelin stood between two warriors with drawn swords. Her torn hood and bedraggled smock had been replaced with rich silks and white cotton, bound about her waist by a velvet vest. A circlet of silver held in her black locks above the ears, and a transparent veil covered her face below the eyes. But eyes and hair and the poise of her young head were unmistakable.

Her glance showed that she knew Robert, but she did not break silence to make an appeal for help. Evidently she and the priest had been among the riders of the camels, and she must have seen all that passed on the edge of the pool.

"Aid, tall brother, for the maid!" cried Will hoarsely. "Draw and smite—bows and bills! See, the dogs would cast her into the water."

Then Robert realized that Ellen's arms were chained and her ankles bound together with a girdle. With the priest and the two Moslems she stood on the brink of the ledge, swaying in the wind. The other women who had screened the captives until then had been herded ahead along the narrow path. This path, no more than two paces

wide, ran between the wall of the cliff and the dark space of the abyss.

As he watched, Inalzig made another sign, and one of the guards seized the girl's long tresses, twisting them tight in his grasp. Her eyes widened in horror as the warrior, grinning, forced her to the very edge of the rock.

"Yonder maid," observed the keeper of the Gate reflectively, "was taken from among the Franks. We have other women, from Armenia and the Bedawan villages, and they are kept for the pleasure of the Shah. Such is the custom of the forays beyond the border—yet, O ameer, the red-beard may have touched her, and the touch of a dog of an unbeliever is defilement. So—thrust her over," he ordered the warrior who held her fast.

And Inalzig's white teeth flashed under his thin mustache.

"Ha! Would a Cairene act thus?"

Robert had leaped the space between the dam and the ledge. The warrior who stood over the girl released his prey and lifted shield and simitar as he strode to meet the knight.

"Ah no, my lord!" Ellen cried, raising her chained arms eagerly. "Keep to your guise and your own purpose. No man's aid will serve to abate our misfortune, and you would be lost!"

She covered her eyes.

"The sweet Mother in Heaven give strength!"

The Moslem who opposed Robert took time for a swift glance at the two chiefs, who shouted an order at him, and the knight drew his sword. The guard's lips lifted in a snarl as he braced his legs for a leap forward. Then he flung up his shield.

In a gleaming arc the heavy blade of the crusader flashed, and the Moslem's simitar was knocked down. His shield of hide and wood crumpled, and the blade hewed through his left arm, deep into his side. The man was swept over the ledge, and Robert freed his blade with a jerk as the body dropped out of sight.

"Well struck, O Nazarene!" applauded Inalzig. "Said I not you would be put to a test at the Gates? Ha, no guise will veil your heart hereafter. Like your follower, I had a devil from the first day, and the devil was doubt."

The second guard rushed low at Robert, to be met with the point of the sword and

slain in his tracks. Will Bunsley scrambled to his feet, wrenching the simitar from the hand of the falling slave.

"Let us show them our heels, brother," he muttered excitedly. "Do thou take up the maid and run along the path."

Robert, however, knew that this was just what the Moslems must desire him to do. Moreover the blind priest could not run, and there was no time to release the girl's bonds. He had been tricked and well tricked.

And fierce exultation warmed his heart. No need, now, of racking his brain for the words of deceit. He had jumped to aid the maid instinctively, and even now he might have explained his cutting down of the guards—if Inalzig and the captain of the warders would listen. But he had no desire to try them and for their part they prepared readily to make an end of him. There was the gleam of steel, red in the torchlight, before him and the feel of his sword-haft in his fists.

"Stand clear," he growled at the archer, and stepped to meet the first two spearmen who crossed from the dam to the pathway.

Ellen had slipped to her knees and was moving toward Father Evagrius, who was trying to draw her back to the cliff, his face upturned in the patient questioning of those who can not see what goes on about them.

As Will pushed forward stubbornly beside him Robert swept him back with his left arm and slashed at the nearest spear-head. The steel point flew humming through the air, and the crusader dodged the thrust of the second. The Moslems crouched and reached for their long knives. They had not yet learned that the round targets of bull's hide were no protection against the long weapon of their foe. Robert cut through one shield and the skull of the man behind it.

The other warrior shouted and leaped, and Robert missed catching his dagger arm as it came down. But he stepped forward, and the man's knife snapped on the chain mail of his back.

Robert caught hold with his free hand on the man's shoulder blade and—sensing Will's presence behind—jerked him back, to be dealt with by the yeoman's sword. A snarling grunt that changed to a scream sounded from the path, and presently a splash in the water below.

"Sa-hal" chanted Will. "Another knave

a-swim in the Styx. Guard thee, tall brother—so! Pretty work—yeomanly struck."

A third Moslem had followed close upon the other two and raised his simitar. Robert, caught with his blade down, jammed the heavy hilt into the man's beard and took the simitar stroke on his helmet. The blow sent flames flying before his eyes, and the light steel cap spun from his head. But the Moslem was down, choking, and the knight took another pace forward, leaving Will to dispose of the injured warrior.

A spear splintered against the mail on his chest, and he reeled, coughing, for the point had lodged in his breast-bone. The man who had flung it shouted and whirled up his simitar. The knight parried one cut that would have hacked a knee in half and staggered again, when another spear tore into his left shoulder. The guard—a big-boned Turk—pressed forward too hastily and was dashed down when his legs were cut out from under him by a slash of the long blade.

"By the ninety and nine holy names!" swore Inalzig, who had followed the fighting with glittering eyes. "Here is one who should be brought alive to Bokhara, for he is not as common men. See, he strides forward again."

"Then do you take him alive, O khan," snarled the captain.

Will was feverish with exultation. Only three men beside the two chiefs stood on the dam, and these held the torches. Behind them the Kankalis had vanished from sight and hearing. If the strength of the knight could crush these five as well as the six who had died, they would be free, for the moment, in the gorge. But he did not mark how the two wounds had bitten into the thews of his companion.

Inalzig Khan rushed as a falcon stoops—warily, quick of eye, and with his long cloak sweeping about him. His simitar glittered above his shield. Some one behind him hurled a torch at the knight.

Bending low, Robert moved to meet the Moslem, and the two swords grated. The simitar bent nearly double and whipped clear—whipped down on the crusader's sword-arm, cutting to the bone. Robert stumbled forward, threw himself against Inalzig and felt for the Moslem's knife-hilt, while Inalzig felt for his throat and found it.

Jerking the curved dagger free, Robert thrust with failing strength at his foe's

thighs under the mail. Inalzig's eyes glared into his, blood-seared and protruding. The knife-blade slipped upward on the Moslem's thigh-bone, and the curved point caught within his ribs.

His grip on Robert's throat fell away, and the knight gasped for air and felt himself drop through space. Instantly the torch-light faded, and he crashed into water, still locked with his adversary. Blackness grew denser, and then red flames shot up before his eyes and his nostrils stung. Blood flooded his throat.

He coughed—found that he could gulp in air—and moved his limbs feebly to keep afloat. For what seemed an interminable time he swam in a gigantic chasm, conscious of lights above him and—once—of Abdullah, the minstrel, looking down at him calmly. Then water splashed over his face, and the blackness was complete.

CHAPTER VII

OSMAN THE WAZIR

MANY things appeared to Robert to take place very rapidly. He felt delightfully at ease, although aware that his body was being jolted, the creaking of leather and the jolting made him think he was riding again, though how he could ride lying down he knew not. Then the sun smote full into his eyes, and somebody shaded them. Robert peered out between two curtains and saw the green expanse of a wide sea with a sail drifting along the horizon. A salty wind caused him to shiver violently, and, still shivering, he dropped back into the inertia.

Again he found himself studying the stars, looking for the Great Bear and recalling that Abdullah had called it *jitti karatchi*, the Seven Robbers. He could not make out the robbers, and told himself that this was a strange sky as well as a strange sea.

Once he lay on his elbow, looking down at the earth. It was whitish gray. Taking up some in his fingers, he put his tongue to it and found it to be salt. A strange earth. He was bathed in sweat, and a woman came and wiped his face and hands with a cool, moist cloth.

He began talking to the woman, telling her about the changed earth and the remarkable sea that was so cold and so hot. By and by he noticed that the woman was

weeping and that she was the Demoiselle d'Ibelin. Henceforth events happened less swiftly and Robert grew irritable with pain, but more often he felt the girl's touch and drank things from her hand.

"Where is that rogue, Abdullah?" he asked, his voice ringing clear.

"He is not here, my lord. Nay, I have not see him since the night in the mountains when he talked with the infidels, and—But, hush, please you, Sir Robert."

"*Demoiselle*," he remarked with dignity. "I am not Sir Robert of Antioch. I am Robert the Wayfarer; and as every man's hand is against me, so is mine against every man. Where is the lout, Will?"

"The archer is chained—nay, do not miscall him, for he jumped into the gorge and saved you your life many days ago."

"Now that is verily a lie," Robert responded angrily, "for this is but the morrow of that night."

With that he slept, to awaken master of his senses again.

They were in a boat—he and the maid and the priest, and a score of strange warriors. He lay upon a cloak stretched on rushes, with a woven screen over his head.

His first thought was for his sword. It was gone, and he reflected that his horse, also, was lost to him. Then he fumbled about for the chain of rubies and found it not. The mail shirt had been removed, and he was clad in loose cotton, with a light *khalat* wrapped over him.

When he moved, one shoulder irked him with its stiffness. Further investigation revealed a stubby beard and mustache and a growth of hair on his skull that had been shaven. After considering this he asked Father Evagrius, who sat quietly beside his couch, how long he had lain ill, and how he came to be brought alive through the Gates.

"For ten days the fever was heavy upon you, my son. The maid prayed that you would regain your wit and strength, and her prayers were heard. I could not see what befel in the mountain pass, yet meseems Abdullah did persuade the guards to send you living to the lord of this land."

"Did we pass the border of a sea?"

"Aye, Sir Robert. A week ago I heard the wash of the waves for the last time. Since then we have been placed on camels, and yesterday within this long skiff."

Robert thought this over. They must then have left the Caspian behind them,

and by now should be near to the main cities of Khar. So Abdullah had outlined the journey to him. He asked Father Evagrius to call for Ellen, and the priest shook his head, saying that the maid was kept within the after part of the boat, guarded by Ethiopians. The Kankalis, the priest explained, had permitted her to nurse him during the height of his fever, while he was being carried in a horse litter; but now the Moslems took care to keep her apart. Of Will Bunsley he knew little, save that the archer had survived the gorge of the *Sialak* and his voice had been heard at times thereafter, complaining bitterly of his chains and a diet of rice and sour wine.

Unable to sit or stand, Robert was fain to be content with this. He could not see over the side wall of the boat, nor could Evagrius see anything at all, and neither of them might speak with Ellen.

So for days the knight was constrained to lie gazing at the roofed-in after-deck where the slender form of the maid of Ibelin sometimes appeared, heavily veiled. At such moments her eyes would seek him out, and she stood where he was visible until one of the guards signed for her to enter the hangings that separated her from the men.

Father Evagrius spent his time in contemplation, eating slowly when food was brought and fingering the cross that hung from a cord about his lean throat. Robert, waxing more irritable with the confinement and the odors of the boat, marveled at the grave quietude of the priest who was preparing himself to meet death at the hands of the Moslem tormentors.

There came an evening when he could stand and look out from the boat, as the Moslems were at the evening prayer.

The river proved to be broad, and thronged with other craft. Gardens, divided off by lines of flowering trees, lined the bank, and Robert observed at once two marble pillars down-stream. These rose from the dark mass of a wall, and until they drifted through the water gate he would not believe that he had judged truly the height of the wall.

Within it he saw the glimmer of lighted pavilions close to the water, and black spires rearing against sunset over domes that gleamed purple and crimson. Straight down upon their boat rowed a barge, draped in black silk and driven by a score of slaves.

On the raised platform behind the rowers

a half-dozen men, turbaned and robed in many-colored silks, leaned on brocade cushions and stared down at the smaller craft and its crew.

"Ho, Moslems!" A tall man in the bow of the barge challenged them. "Who enters the water gate after nightfall?"

Robert could not understand the reply of his captors, but presently a command issued from the barge and the sailing-skiff was brought alongside, the rowers lifting their oars. The same speaker, who seemed to be overseer of the slaves, ordered the warriors to send up their prisoners and the woman of the Franks. When Robert's guards argued a mellow voice called out from the stern in liquid Arabic.

"Surety? Am I not Osman the *hadji*, Wazir of the Throne and master of Bokhara? I will be surety to the Shah, and that will suffice thee. Jackals—sons of jackals and sires of dissension! Yield up the Franks and seek thy pay in the appointed day and place! Am I a hireling to be affronted by slaves in the hour that Allah decreed for pleasuring?"

To a man the soldiers in the boat cast themselves on their knees and beat their foreheads against the planks. Yet Robert heard one murmur to another that the wazir had kept in his own purse the pay that had been promised them. The negroes ushered Ellen forward, through the waist of the boat, and in the deep shadow under the side of the barge she stumbled.

"Abdullah's word to you, my lord!" she whispered quickly. "Hide it!"

He heard the rustle of paper sliding over the reeds of the deck, and leaned forward.

"And what of you, *demoiselle*?"

"Father Evagrius hath prayed. Tend him—let no injury be done to him."

One of the negroes thrust Robert back, and steel gleamed in the shadow. The girl was lifted to the barge, and he took advantage of the respite to search for and find a narrow roll of parchment that lay near his feet. Putting this in his girdle, he helped the patriarch out of the boat and followed, rendered dizzy by the sudden movement but finding his limbs steadier than he had thought.

"So this is the champion of the Franks," observed one of the Moslems about Osman, "who named himself the Lion and clawed Inalzig, the *bahator*, to death with a score

of warriors at the Gates. Shall we match the lion with a man-eating tiger?"

"Nay, 'twould take an elephant to crush his bones," responded another lightly. "He is greater in bulk than the tallest of the Ethiopians."

"You are both wrong, my cup companions," put in a third. "The Frank, like the maid, is to be kept alive against the coming of the Shah."

Osman, who had been staring at the girl, frowned at this, and a slender boy with insolent eyes ceased tuning a lute long enough to murmur:

"*Allah la yebarak fil!* May Allah not prosper his coming!"

"What words are these words, O Hassan?" reproved the wazir. "Am I not the slave of Muhammad, and was not he——"

"A slave himself, O most generous of lords," quoth Hassan, bending ear to lute again, "when he was my age and caught the eye of a woman."

Somebody mouthed a gibe about the eyes of women, and the assemblage laughed. Osman struck upon a silver gong that hung by his side; and the overseer of the slaves bellowed to the rowers, who brought the barge about and headed down the river into the heart of the lighted city.

Robert, utterly unnoticed, studied Osman curiously. It was the first time he had seen a Kharesmian of the higher classes, and it was difficult to believe that this was not the Shah himself. Osman had pallid, weak-muscled cheeks, surrounded by a narrow beard, and his jeweled turban would have bought a castle in Palestine. His dark lips curved like a girl's, and his fine brown eyes had the blank stare of a dreamer or a user of drugs. From the instant that the *demoiselle* of Ibelin was seated at his side he did not cease to pay her attention.

"Let my counsel be as earrings in thy pretty ears, O damsel. Incline to me, and I will robe thee in samite and cloth of gold, and scent thy eyebrows with attar of rose—so that the Shah himself shall fall bewildered by thy beauty."

He seemed loath to believe that the captive did not understand his praise, but when it was clear that she knew no Arabic the courtiers launched remarks that made the knight turn away so that they could not observe his eyes. It was wiser that they should not be aware that he could follow what was said.

"To the seller of perfume," smiled the boy with the lute, "what remains save the dust of the rose petal? How long, O treasurer, wilt thou labor to keep safe the treasure of the slave who claims to be thy master?"

Osman glanced at him warningly, yet seemed to find food for thought in the idle words. He lifted a drinking-cup of pure jade, and from the waist of the barge cymbals and drums resounded as he drank.

"Nay, Osman," called out a stout man in purple silk who was being fanned by a Nubian slave girl. "Am I not crowned king of the hour of pleasure? What royal honors are accorded me when I lift my cup?"

"The dogs bay."

Hassan displayed white teeth.

"And spent hags pluck thy purse away——"

"Out upon thee! Pfagh—you are rank of the dunghill that bred thee. Who but I bore to our master, this excellent fellow Osman, the news of the taking of Otrar by the barbarians?"

"The tidings that sent Muhammad to the northern border," nodded one who had something of the warrior about him. "It was three moons ago that the Manslayer took Otrar into his maw and sent the head of its governor to the Shah. Allah, he was angered!"

"And I made a song about it," quoth Hassan.

"The *imams* and *kadis* wagged their beards and fouled the carpet of counsel with the spittle of quarrels," nodded the wine-bibber unsteadily.

"And I made a song about that, too."

"Yet the news was good for us because it gave the reins of Government in Bokhara to our lord, Osman."

"O sharp-of-wit, canst thou truly see an ant-hill when the ants bite thy toes?"

"The chief of the Kankalis who was leader of the garrison could not," put in the warrior, signing for a slave to fill his cup again. "At least he drank too much opium by mistake——"

"Thy tongue wags!" whispered one of the courtiers.

"Nay, he was a fine sight in his shroud. By Allah, it came to my ears that his favorite singing-girl slew herself with a dagger——"

"And that was not so fine a sight," broke

in Hassan, "because a shroud was an ill garment for so fair a wench."

He glanced from under kohl-darkened lashes at the Nazarene maid and swept delicate fingers over the strings of his lute, singing under his breath:

"Wilt to Bokhara? Oh, fool for thy pains! To come from the desert to Bokhara's chains!"

The river became narrower and darker where high walls of palaces and mosques lined the banks, but Osman's barge kept to mid-current, and Robert noticed that the other craft got out of its way hastily and other pleasure-seekers knelt as the wazir passed. But Osman had eyes only for the Nazarene maid, and Hassan, perceiving the mood of his master, sang of love and the beauties of women in a voice that was softer than a silver flute. A brazier, burning in the prow, cast a scent of aloes and musk incense into the air, and at command of the leader of the revels, different powders were put into the wine-cups by slaves—hashish, opium and *bhang*. Robert, feigning exhausted sleep, heard other references to the Manslayer, to Otrar and the treasure of Muhammad Shah, as the tongues of the drinkers were loosened.

He made out that Osman was the keeper of the Shah's treasure, which was kept in Bokhara, where no Moslem band dare venture theft. And that Muhammad knew to a dinar's worth the value of the treasure. Otrar, he suspected, was the northernmost fortress of Khar, and its capture by the new foe from the mountains to the north had impelled Muhammad to collect his army and march thither some months ago.

The chief of the barbarian tribes who had entered Khar was spoken of as the Manslayer.



ON A landing-stair of carved marble a throng of Nubian slaves awaited Osman's party with sedan chairs.

Link-bearers attended them, and the girl was put into a closed palanquin, Osman riding in a chair close behind. Robert, taking the arm of the blind priest, walked in the center of the company.

From the shadows of the alley ragged shapes emerged like lame crows hopping to a meal. They croaked for alms, and the slaves thrust them back with their long wands, shouting against the outcry of the beggars for a way to be opened for the wazir.

One of the ragged men stumbled against Hassan's chair, and a flood of obscenity welled from the lips of the singer. The beggar crouched, whining, and Robert saw that his cheeks were blotched, the flesh eaten away to the bone.

"A bow!" Hassan commanded one of his followers and snatched the weapon, ready strung.

The leper lifted swollen hands, and Hassan, smiling, ordered two of the slaves to hold him. Shivering, the Nubians sprang to obey. The bow twanged and the arrow shaft plunged into the creature's stomach.

The knight, who had seen many men die, was sickened, and fought down rising nausea.

"Have we come to the prison, my son?" the gentle voice of Evagrius asked.

"Nay, we are within the streets of a great city."

"The sound of it is evil," nodded the priest. "And the smell is foul, both of dirt and incense. So must Babylon have been ere it was cast down."

In spite of the fact that Osman seemed anxious to take dark and unfrequented ways to his destination, Robert was amazed by the size of the walled-in dwellings, the stone towers and marble pools that were glimpsed as they passed. Loitering crowds sighted them and stared at the two Franks, spitting and clenching their hands on perceiving the dark robe of the priest. Robert thought that surely Babylon could not have been a greater place than this.

At a bronze gateway Osman's escort halted, and the master of revelry hastened to his side. The man had sobered perceptibly.

"Lord and *hadji*," he muttered earnestly, "do not stumble with the foot of recklessness upon the pit of misfortune. The maid was to be sent to the palace of the Shah with the other women captives. Will you dare take her within your dwelling?"

"O small-of-wit," responded the wazir slowly, "if harm came to the Nazarene, who would face the blame?"

"You."

"Most true. And so shall I keep her safe, under my eye, until Muhammad returns. Who else is to be trusted with a pearl such as this, beyond price?"

"It would be better," objected the courtier, "to take under your hand the throne treasure, for safekeeping. That would buy

allegiance of a host of chiefs, whereas a fair woman will—"

"Please the eye of Muhammad more than countless swords."

Osman signed for the palanquin bearing the captive girl to be taken to one of the buildings about the central garden, and gave over the knight and the priest to some guards, who led them to a postern door and up a winding stair for so great a distance that Robert knew they must be ascending a tower.

Upon a landing of the stair a narrow door was unbarred, and they were pushed into darkness. Robert bade the priest stand still while he investigated, and discovered that they were in a small, semicircular chamber furnished only with a rug and mattresses to sleep upon. An oval window, barely large enough to admit his head through, enabled him to look out over the garden, and he heard a voice like a nightingale's where lights glowed under the trees beneath the tower—

"Wilt to Bokhara? O fool for thy pains!"

Osman's tower proved to be the highest of the many minarets and cupolas of Bokhara—higher even than the emperor's palace, as Robert observed the next morning. Moreover in the open square and market-places near the tower were the tents of several thousand Kankalis—easily distinguished by their black cloaks and trappings.

Beyond the mosques and academies were the tents and picket-lines of a host of mounted warriors. Where the caravan roads led into the gates of Bokhara's wall other pavilions were pitched. Although the distance was too great for the knight to be sure of the numbers, he estimated forty thousand men under arms within his range of vision and guessed at as many more elsewhere.

Hourly long lines of camels threaded through the gates and pushed into the already crowded market-places. Passing along the alleys beneath him, he made out throngs of *mullahs*, followed by their disciples, jostled by swaggering Turkomans and pushed aside by the riders that were continually entering and leaving Osman's palace.

And four times a day there floated out over the humming confusion of alley and bazaar the musical call of the summoner-to-prayer.

"*Allah akbar!* God is great. . . . There is no God but God. . . . Pray ye! Prayer is good, and the hour of prayer is at hand!"

The gigantic concourse, the uproar of voices, the smells—that rose even to the tower—wrought upon the senses of the watcher even as Osman's music and incense had failed to do and brought home to him the power of the stronghold of Islam. It was during the first dawn-prayer, when the light was strong enough to read by, that he took out Abdullah's scroll and scanned it in the window niche where the guards in the outer corridor could not see him through the aperture in the door that served to pass in food and enable them to spy upon the prisoners. The letter began abruptly.

Salaam, yah ahmah—greeting, O fool! I have brought you to Bokhara, in spite of your folly which nearly made the Gate the end of the road.

Have you never learned that one rider can pass where four may not go abreast? Why then strive to befriend three others, and two of them weaklings? But what is done is done, and what will be, will be. I have claimed on your behalf that you are the greatest of all the Franks, and it is well that the name of Longsword has penetrated even to the borders of Khar. The Shah will desire to see you, and until his arrival you are safe, for I swore on the Koran that your disguise was needed to take you through the desert tribes.

I also swore that you had been cast out by your peers of Palestine and sought the service of Muhammad, for that also was necessary to keep you from being put into a shroud by the followers of Inalzig.

Your sword is more eloquent than your tongue; keep silence and listen, for Bokhara breeds more gossip than a dunghill vermin. Take these matters to heart, chiefly:

Osman is only lip-loyal to the Shah. The treasurer is the companion of Muhammad's mother, *Turkhan khatun*, who holds the allegiance of the Kankalis, who in turn are the backbone of the Kharesmian host. Osman secretly poisoned the ameer who commanded the garrison of Bokhara, and would do away with the council of the *imams*, who are the Moslem elders. The Shah fears him, the *imams* hate him. If he could lay hand on the throne treasure he would be master of Khar.

Ponder these matters and gather your strength again, for you will have need of wit and daring when I seek you. *Bahator*, a new path will be opened up by the next moon, and we will ride again.

Three times Robert pored through the delicate Arabic scroll writing and then thrust it into a crack between the bricks outside the window, wondering more than a little what manner of man might be Abdullah, who seemed to go freely wherever he willed and to judge any situation with a clear mind. The crusader was beholden to

him for his life, and yet could not be sure Abdullah was his friend.

For days he paced the chamber, or slept heavily as they sleep who are casting off the inertia of sickness. And though he often pondered Abdullah's message, he could make little of it. He had come among men who learned to plot before they were weaned, who built mosques that outrivaled the temple of Solomon, who could fashion weapons that made the clumsy arms of the crusaders look like flails and scythes. Without a weapon in his hand and a horse between his knees, he was restless; and often he found himself thinking of the girl who had come with the pilgrims to seek the Holy Sepulcher and had been led to Bokhara. Father Evagrius talked of her after his fashion, blaming no one for her fate.

"When all is told," the knight observed thoughtfully, "is not her state better here than on the roads of Palestine?"

"Is yours?"

"Nay, my case is different."

"You, my lord, have achieved much against the paynims. Will you swear to me that you will strive to speak again with Ellen d'Ibelin and ransom her from this infidel king?"

Robert frowned, chin on hand.

"Nay, that will I not. What ransom would suffice him who sits on the Throne of Gold? What have I?"

"My son, in this life we serve not ourselves. Not long ago the good yeoman leaped into the pool of the gorge and saved you from drowning, and thereafter the maiden tended you when the fever ran in your veins. What will you do for them?"

Glancing from the embrasure, Robert shook his head.

"Could you see the vast city and its wall, twice the height of Jerusalem's—aye, and the array of Moslems passing in and out upon the roads, you would not talk of hope. We have been brought hither like beasts for the eyes of the emperor to scan. Nay, Evagrius, 'twere folly to deceive ourselves. If the maid and the yeoman were free, and I, and we had horses—could we ride over these walls? And, even so, could we achieve a passage through five hundred leagues of Moslem lands?"

He laughed without merriment.

"Nay, Abdullah spoke truth to Montserrat. Whosoever enters Khar returns not."

The priest smiled.

"My blind eyes have seen more than that. The Red Sea dividing its waters, so that the Christian host passed through. Aye, and water issuing from a rock in the desert."

Evagrius nodded gently and sank into one of his long musing spells. Robert leaned back against the door, where he could listen to the talk of the guards in the corridor, and presently both were aware of a change in the sounds that drifted up from the alleys and gardens below.

The hum of talk had died away, although it was past the hour of evening prayer for the Moslems. In the water garden of the palace the companions of the wazir were sitting about their cups, and Hassan's clear voice rose in mockery above their laughter. Somewhere a woman began wailing, and slipped feet pattered along a corridor. A horse galloped furiously along the palace wall, and presently the hum of talk arose again in the alleys.

"What do the warriors, our warders, argue?" asked Evagrius, for the voices were louder than usual outside the door.

"They are disputing about the war. Otrar, one of the cities of Khar, fifty leagues from here, has fallen into the hands of the barbarians. There has been a battle between the host of the Shah and the barbarian chief who is called the Manslayer."

Robert listened with rising interest.

"They say that Otrar was taken in a week, and ten thousand Moslems slain. A short siege, forsooth. Before that there was a battle in the northern mountains. One man claims that the Shah overthrew his foes; another that he lost half his warriors—a hundred thousand."

"Who is this foe?"

"They name him now the Great Khan, which is to say Genghis Khan, and his tribe are called Mongols."

CHAPTER VIII

Not by the robe of honor on his shoulders, not by the sword on his hip, not by the words on his lips is a man to be judged.

When a friend calls for aid—then is the warrior weighed in the balance. And by his deeds, not by his promises, is the bahator judged.

THE next morning the talk of the warders was that Muhammad was approaching Bokhara with his army and there was rejoicing in the bazaars. Carpets were hung out on the balconies overlooking

the wide street that led from the Otrar gate through the *rihistan*—the central square on which the great Jumma mosque was situated—past the two palaces of the Shah and Osman, over the bridge that spanned the canal, to the western gate.

All this Robert observed, for his embrasure faced the east and north; but he saw too that while the Bokharians prepared a triumphal entry for the Shah, many caravans came out of the east and passed by the city while none went the other way. He reflected that if the Shah had overthrown his foes merchants would not be bearing away their goods.

While he was watching visitors came to his door, and he beheld bearded faces topped by huge turbans peering in at him. A low-voiced argument between the owners of the turbans and Osman's guards followed, until the door was flung open for the first time since his entry and a stout man with worried, sunken eyes walked in.

"This is the *mullah*," announced one of the spearmen, "who has in his keeping the Jumma mosque, and Allah alone knows why he is bearing you hence for a day, O dog of an unbeliever," he grumbled.

The *mullah* drew up the skirts of his silk robe as he passed Father Evagrius, and stared for a full moment at Robert.

"Are you verily the infidel *bahator* who withstood Nasr-ud-deen at Antioch and broached the wall of Damietta?" he asked in scholarly Arabic.

Robert bent his head to conceal his surprise, but the Bokharian guessed his thought.

"We of Khar are conversant with the events of the borderland of Islam, for this is the heart of Islam. The heart would not beat as high if a vein in one finger were opened. Speak, O *caphar*, for Abdullah sang your praises and made known to us that you are acquainted with our speech."

"True, O *hadji*."

For the *mullah* wore the green turban cloth that showed he had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

With another scornful glance at the impassive blind man the *mullah* signed for Robert to follow and led the way down the tower stair. In the street they were joined by a half-dozen dignitaries of the town, *imams* and *kadis*—hawk-faced Turkomans and stalwart Uzbeks, all looking more than a little troubled and all armed. They took

the shortest way—as Robert knew from his study of the streets—to the canal and the wall beyond the bridge.

Once he set foot on the walk that ran on the summit of the wall, Robert strode to the crenellated parapet and stared down. The nobles watched him silently as men might eye a horse that was going through its paces.

"Abdullah," observed one presently, "who is a cup-companion of the Shah—upon whom be peace—said in our hearing that the Saracens of Syria set the price of a king's ransom on your head because you were master of the art of siege."

Robert kept silence, inwardly cheered by the knowledge that the various Moslem races were more often than not tearing at each other's throats and that the Kharezmians apparently were not allied to the Saracens whom he had fought. So he waited for the speaker to explain himself.

"In the mulberry grove below," the man went on, "is the *mazar* of a venerable *sheikh* who dared to prophesy. Aye, he foretold to Muhammad that a day would come when the walls of Bokhara would be one with the plain, and cattle would graze where its mosques had been."

The *mullah* pushed forward to add his word.

"By command of Muhammad, the shadow of God upon earth, this man was cast into the pit of vermin, having first been blinded. Thus his death was slow, yet because of his sanctity the *mazar* was erected. Muhammad did not act wisely."

Seeing that they sought something from him, Robert continued to gaze indifferently down at the grove and its shrine.

"How long, O *caphar*," demanded the *mullah* at last impatiently, "could Bokhara withstand a siege?"

"With how many men for garrison?"

"You have seen them, and you have seen the wall."

Robert shook his head, smiling.

"Will one claw show the size of a tiger—or its teeth?"

After consulting together they led him a league or so around the summit of the wall until they were winded, and the knight waxed exultant with his first hour out in the sun. The guards at each tower and stair looked at him until he was out of sight. The sentries that squatted by each *ballista* to cast arrow sheaves and each

mangonel for the casting of naphtha jars forgot to scratch themselves and salaam to the *mullah*.

Robert, standing half a head taller than the Bokharians, with his tawny beard uncombed and his yellow hair falling on his square shoulders, strode in the lead, for his interest was aroused; and his gray eyes gleamed as he studied the engines of defense, which differed little from those in Palestine. The murmurs of the warriors gathered around stew-pot and dicing reached his ears, but he gave them little heed—though the *kadis* were more attentive.

The men were saying to one another that here was another Iskander from the land of the Franks. The *mullah* knew better, but one of the *kadis* twitched his sleeve and held up a row of coins that served to ornament his sword-belt. They were old coins, dug out of the cellars of the city, and one bore the head of Alexander.

"Nay, he is no Iskander," they decided. "But the poise of the head, and the brow and the hair—aye, and the chin are the same. He must be of the race of Macedon."

They seemed to take comfort from this, although the knight could have told them otherwise. In the memory of the councilors, old men had told stories of the rule of the Bactrian-Greek generals who governed Bokhara until a Chinese horde came out of the east—to be driven away in turn by the Arabs, who were succeeded by the Khar dynasty, the emperors before Muhammad.

"How long could the wall be held?" they asked all together when the *mullah* halted at the Otrar gate, which, being the chief gate of the city, was used as site for exposing the heads of men slain by order of the Shah—being ornamented by wizened shapes of skin, and hovering birds.

"Forever," answered Robert briefly. "If two things happen not."

He was amazed at the labor that had gone into the fortification. The blocks of sun-dried brick were hard as stone, and the wall was solid, a full eight spears' lengths in height and three in width. Moreover, except where the river flowed, the country outside was a wind-whipped, sandy waste. A besieging army would need to drag timber for engines and food from a distance. There was plenty of water within the city and ample forces to man the wall. No

ordinary stone-casters could make a breach wide enough to do harm.

"What two things?" demanded the Moslems in unison.

"Treachery, or poor leadership."

The councilors stared at him with hard, covetous eyes and fingered their beards.

"*Inshallah!* That is a truth. Can not the wall be made stronger?"

Robert nodded.

"Dig a ditch at its foot—a wide ditch. Or the foe would start tunnels to run under and collapse the towers."

"And what else?"

"Nay," the knight smiled, "am I also a prophet to tell of what is to be? What I know, I know, and words are easily twisted. I have answered your question."

They drew apart to talk again; and when they began to argue, he suspected that the Bokharians had no one who could put the city in a condition for defense. The leader of the garrison being dead, and Osman occupied with his own affairs, the forces in the city lacked a head.

"You have told us no more than we understood before!" exclaimed a *kadi* with a narrow skull and a wisp of a beard. "Surely you have greater knowledge than that, and we have means to make you speak. The vermin-pit is an ill dwelling-place."

"Lies are easily had," assented the knight, "and in Bokhara I have heard much lying and little truth."

"We will make a bargain with you, O Nazarene. If you will advise our captains how to prepare the city for defense we will speak a word on your behalf to the Shah."

"And if I tell them what to do, who is to see it done?"

After much argument the Moslems offered to let the crusader come to the wall each day, to watch the progress of the work, and to give advice to the various chiefs who would command the slaves who would do the work. Muhammad was expected in three days. Robert stipulated that the *mullah* and the judges were to give him a signed promise that no harm would come to Father Evagrius during this time.



AT SUNRISE, the next three days, he was on the wall, attended by guards of Osman's household, and the nobles, who at first listened contemptuously to the plans of an infidel, began to

stroke their beards and to ask for fresh suggestions. A multitude of slaves were turned loose outside the wall to dig the ditch.

Across the canal at both entrances a chain was stretched, and a bridge of barges set in place inside the chain. Wooden parapets were erected on the barges and detachments of archers told off to practise shooting in triple ranks; the engines were greased with sheep's fat, and new timbers shaped by craftsmen where the old were decayed.

The chiefs of the Kankalis and Turkomans were better skilled in leading their men on forays than in preparing for a siege, and the headmen of the city saw the worth of what Robert advised. The knight himself, glad of something to do at last, went among the soldiers showing them by example what he wanted done. Meanwhile the councilors did not neglect to seize the cattle of the countryside and to fill up the granaries of the city.

By the third evening the slaves had been joined by throngs of merchants and idlers, for it was known at last that the Moslem host under Muhammad had suffered at the hands of the barbarians, and that the Shah was actually in flight before the Mongols. He had with him a formidable army, and with Bokhara prepared for siege and the Shah to lead the defense the Moslems of the city had no fear of the outcome.

That night Robert found a scroll from Abdullah awaiting him on the silver platter that bore his evening meal, in the tower room. The missive ran:

"O little son you have done well, and I have not been idle. Gold, in Bokhara, is the key to all gates save that of the treasure, which is hidden. Your warders have pouched gold from my hand. On the morrow demand to be taken to the street, to stand in the crowd when Muhammad passes. Speak boldly when the time comes, for the devil had his paw on a timid man.

With the first streak of sunrise the knight confided to Father Evagrius that Abdullah had appointed a meeting-place, for what purpose he did not know. He had been content to follow the hints given out by the minstrel, who seemed to wish to make known the worth of the man he had brought to Khar.

He found that the three men who were on guard in the corridor were quite prepared to take him down to the street. They

wanted to watch the spectacle themselves, and Robert had been allowed to go out before this. But the knight suspected they had been bribed.

From the window he saw that the flat house-tops were lined with throngs of watchers and that carpets had been laid in the street through which Muhammad must pass to go to his palace; and before the guard had been changed, he perceived dust rising in a long line out on the plain.

When the first horsemen entered the Otrar gate under the sightless eyes of the heads exposed there by order of the Shah, Robert was taken down to the garden and thence to the street where Osman's followers were jammed against the wall. His guards, anxious for a better view, elbowed their way forward with the knight, claiming that the wazir had ordered Robert to be displayed as his prisoner.

Room was made for him in the outer line, and for hours he watched the passing of bodies of horsemen. These were strange to his sight—dark-skinned warriors, well mounted, who cursed the crowd when the way was obstructed. The ponies were sweat-streaked, and many of the riders bore wounds. Robert noticed that they had no spare mounts and no baggage. They looked like men who had been in the saddle throughout the night.

The tumult in the street was echoed from the housetops when it was seen that the van of the cavalry did not halt at the river. Instead they crossed the bridge and passed out of the southern gate. The Bokharians mocked them for cowards who did not dare make a stand in the city, and the Shah's men answered in kind.

Other riders followed—Persian mailed archers, with high lambskin hats and bronze shields. One of the guards at Robert's elbow shouted a question, which was answered by a blow from a scabbard. But rumors were buzzing in the crowd.

"To Samarkand—the army goes to Samarkand! Nay, to Herat, for I heard—Allah, they lost their tents, and all but—To the mountains, I say—they draw their reins to Khorassan."

Behind Robert the press grew greater. A gaunt Turkoman *beg*, smelling of sheepskins, bared yellow teeth and roared in his ear:

"Pillage! The door is open to plunder! Death to the Franks!"

They were thrust forward into the dust-cloud as the slaves of Osman issued from the palace gate and beat a path for their master, who sat in a palanquin. Catching sight of Robert, he signed for the guards to bring the captive after him and ordered his bearers to run toward the *rihistan*.

"Where is Muhammad Shah?" bellowed the Turkoman, running with them. "Where are the ameers?"

Osman lay back on his pillows, closing the curtains against the dust. They passed an array of spearmen mounted on camels and—thanks to the wands of the Nubians—emerged into the great square at the same moment that some score of elephants came swaying up the street on the other side. Before and behind the elephants galloped horsemen, white with dust, drawn simitars in hand. Abreast the pillars of the Jumma mosque the leading elephant—a towering beast painted green and red, with steel blades lashed to its tusks—slowed its ambling gait and threw up its trunk. The lines of Bokharians near Robert cast themselves on their knees, pressing their foreheads to earth. So he was able to see the *mullah* of the mosque standing on the steps of the edifice.

And, when the elephant came to a halt, the man who sat alone in the glittering howdah stared first at Osman and then at Robert, who remained standing.

"Hail to Muhammad Shah, the mighty, the victorious!" roared the crowd.

Robert saw a face under a turban that glittered with jewels—a puffy face with restless eyes. Osman climbed from his litter and salaamed.

"O monarch of the world, make thine elephant kneel. Thy palace is in readiness."

He spoke boldly, and under the words was a shadow of mockery. The Shah leaned forward.

"Upon thee the peace, O *hadji*!" he greeted the *mullah* first. "Necessity has changed my plans. I ride to Herat, there to gather together the new forces from the south."

The dark eyes of the wazir glittered, although he did not seem surprized.

"And what of Bokhara? What is thy command?"

"To defend it against the Mongols," replied the man in the howdah slowly. "In council the ameers of the kingdom have given decision to retire to the walled cities.

Against these the foe will spend his strength, while a fresh army gathers under my standard."

"And is this thy decision also, O king?" asked Osman loudly.

"It is my command."

The minister bent his head.

"To hear is to obey. Give to thy servants the boon of the Presence, if it be only for one night, that our hearts may be strengthened."

Muhammad hesitated, and Robert thought then that this man was not of a race of leaders, if he knew not his own mind. Instead of answering he signed for Osman and the *mullah* to approach closer, and they talked for several moments in low voices. Then deliberately the wazir made a response loud enough for Robert and the nearest horsemen to hear.

"Lord of the age, companion of the warriors of Islam, mirror of the glory of Allah—give to thy poorest servant, Osman, the wazir, thy signet ring and the command of Bokhara's garrison, that his back may be straightened and his courage heightened and thine enemies confounded."

Again Muhammad hesitated while Osman waited at ease. It occurred to Robert that if Osman was powerful enough to speak insolently to the emperor, a successful defense of the city would strengthen the wazir's hand. Osman already had under his influence an army as great as the Shah's; a considerable victory would win him new followers.

"Nay," said the man in the howdah, firmly this time, "the care of the treasure is thine—and the *mullah's*. Is not that enough care?"

Other officials now approached the elephant, and there was a brief conference. Osman dissembled his disappointment and listened attentively. Presently Robert recognized Abdullah's voice and saw the minstrel close to the howdah, laughing as at some excellent jest.

Muhammad glanced at the *mullah*.

"Is it true, O *hadji*, that the *imams* have asked for a new leader?"

"Protector of the Faith, it is true."

"Then I name the ameer of the Franks, the conqueror of the Saracens, commander of the garrison of Bokhara."

A murmur went up at this, and men pushed closer to study the face of Muhammad. Until the Shah signed to him Robert

did not realize that he was the man in question. Osman for once looked utterly astonished, but the *mullah* seemed satisfied. When he stood under the elephant Robert saw that the lines of fatigue and worry were strongly marked in Muhammad's broad face, and that he was too restless to keep still for long.

"Will you swear, O Nazarene," the *mullah* asked, "to serve the Shah in this thing and to give your utmost to the defense of the city?"

The knight looked up silently at the man in the howdah, who turned impatiently on the officers below.

"What is this? We have escorted this warrior from Syria, and you have failed to give him sword or armor or horse. A robe of honor for his shoulders, and do you choose a horse from the best?"

Several of the *imams* hurried off to obey, and Robert saw Abdullah smile. Osman was chewing at a strand of his mustache, his brow unruffled but his eyes dark with anger that heightened when Muhammad loosened the signet ring on his finger and tossed it down to one of the mounted *ameers*, who pressed it to his forehead and extended it to the knight.

"Do you swear allegiance, Nazarene?" cried the *mullah* again.

"Tell me first," Robert answered slowly, "what authority goes with the ring?"

The keeper of the mosque opened wide his eyes; and Muhammad, listening, started as if he had set his hand on a scorpion.

"Power of life and death! Bokhara is in the hands of its garrison, and you are the leader of the garrison. My favor is accorded you."

The knight faced Muhammad, and perhaps he was the calmest man of them all because he was skeptical.

"O king, I have heard. What then of Osman? Can there be two moons in the same night? Is my word to be obeyed over his?"

"Boldly have you spoken, O *ameer*."

Muhammad did not seem displeased this time, and he gave the knight the Moslem title.

"*Yah khawand*, the men of the garrison will obey your commands; a *firman*, a decree, shall be written for their leaders to see. The good wazir has authority in matters of the treasury."

He glanced restlessly at the tall crusader.

"It has been dinned into my ears by my councilors that you are the one man who can defend the wall of Bokhara. Give me your pledge that you will do so!"

"Speak, fool," whispered Abdullah, reining his horse nearer Robert.

"First," observed the knight, "do you pledge me safety from harm for three persons."

"Allah, what are they?"

"The Nazarene damsel carried from Palestine by Inalzig Khan and her companion the archer, and—" Robert turned to the *mullah*—"the priest Evagrius."

"They are yours."

Robert bent his head.

"O king, there be many witnesses to that promise. And to mine. I swear that I will do my utmost to hold Bokhara for you against your foes."

"You have my leave to withdraw."

The man in the howdah turned to speak to the *mullah*, when a rider passed forward from the rear and rose in his stirrups to exchange a quick word with Muhammad—a word of warning, Robert thought. The Shah uttered a sharp command, the mahout tugged at the elephant's neck with his hook and the great beast swayed into a walk, then broke into a long shamle, followed by the others.

The Bokharians were forced to scramble aside, out of the way, and a disorderly horde of infantry flooded the square, pushing after the elephants. The throng on the housetops and about the mosque knew by now—for tidings travel swiftly in a Moslem crowd—that the Shah was minded to leave the city with the troops that attended his person, and that he had appointed a captive, an infidel, to take command of the garrison. Even now the crowd, fatalists without the power of acting on their own initiative, made no protest at the departure of their Shah. As the glittering elephant swept by, the throngs prostrated themselves; and something like silence settled on the square, where a dozen officers stood about Robert, who was staring at the ring in his palm.

Osman was the first to move forward.

"*Salaam, yah khawand*. We have heard the word of the lord of Khar, and there is naught but obedience in our hearts. Command, and my men obey."

The *mullah* came next, followed by the nobles, who bore a shirt of silvered chain

mail, a crested helmet and a cloak of black silk. They took off Robert's old *khalat* and fitted on the mail, slipping the cloak over it and winding his waist with a girdle of cloth of gold. A simitar of blue steel with a hilt set with glittering gems was offered to the knight, and he took it. Still doubtful of the reality of the honor, he gathered up the reins of a white Arab pony with the mane and head of a king's charger. When he swung into the saddle he flushed with sheer pleasure.

"*Salaam, bahator*," his companions saluted him.

Robert raised his sword and took up his rein. Abdullah came to his side.

"A slave's greetings to Iskander," he cried. "May the road of your namesake be open before you."

CHAPTER IX

WILL FINDS A BOW

WITH some ten thousand staring at him, the new Ameer of Bokhara issued his first commands and watched without seeming to do so to see if each were acknowledged—Abdullah finding great amusement thereby.

Robert appointed a conference for the chiefs of the various tribes in the courtyard of the Shah's palace two hours hence. He called the several *atabegs* within view to him, and sent one to take immediate charge at every gate of the city. The *imams* he requested to draw up lists of the amount of food in the granaries and the total of the weapons stored in the armories.

From the crowd he picked out the Turkoman *beg* who had talked about killing him, and the man knelt with quivering cheeks, evidently expecting that he would be given over to torture. Instead he was bade to select a hundred riders and set out to the east to establish an advanced post beyond sight of the city. Other detachments were ordered off, to patrol the river and caravan tracks beyond the walls.

His commands were received with the deepest respect and executed at once. Robert, aware of the *mullah* at his elbow, turned in his saddle.

"O *hadji*, is it fitting that the leader of your warriors should stretch his cloak in an alley and have the sky for a roof?"

The keeper of the temple started, eyed

the knight keenly a moment and nodded gravely.

"True. A house shall be made ready in the garden quarter by the river, and slaves——"

"To this house," Robert suggested to Osman, "the blind priest and the archer can be sent before the hour is ended."

The wazir bowed in silence.

"And the Nazarene maid."

Their eyes met, and the minister of the Shah twisted his fingers in the pearls that hung from his throat.

"*Yah khawand!* What words are these? In this place? To name a woman before listeners is to shame a follower of the Prophet!"

"Yet, O wazir, I am a Nazarene and a man of my word. If the maid is not placed in this dwelling, unharmed, before the sands have run from the hour-glass I shall open your gate with a thousand spears."

Osman exchanged glances with the *mullah* and extended both hands open before him.

"Who am I but the slave of him who has honored you? It shall be as you have said."

Robert watched him out of sight, well aware that he had made at least one bitter enemy. Turning the long ring on his finger, he studied the massive sapphire, cut in the form of a seal, in the gold setting. Then he raised his head and smiled.

"Here is a riddle, and I would know the answer in true words."

"Command me," suggested Abdullah promptly, but Robert shook his head.

"*Hadji*," he asked of the *mullah*, "have you in your house a *hamman*, a bath where the bathmen are discreet? Then may I be your guest for one-half of the hour?"

Surprized, the *mullah* signed for him to ride to the rear of the mosque, and Abdullah stared after the two thoughtfully. The boy Hassan approached his horse and peered up mockingly.

"Lick thy palm, O teller of tales. The cup-companion is the favorite of a day and then—the dust of the rose petal remains to the seller of perfume."

Having launched this shaft the boy darted away and overtook Osman's palanquin at the gate of the wazir's palace, harkening with interest to the low-voiced exclamations of his patron.

"O dog of a mongrel pack! O eater of filth! To claim with a loud tongue what was mine! Son of dishonor and father of

foulness! To speak of the maid that would have been mine—aye, before a multitude! O fool and madman—Nazarene, prince of unbelievers—thy grave will be dug by jackals, and dogs will tear it loose again. May the bones of thy mother and thy father's father suffer a like fate."

Perceiving Hassan awaiting him, Osman mastered his rage somewhat and ordered the singer to run to the dwelling that was being prepared for the Frank, and stint not gold among the slaves selected by the *imams* for his service. Having confidently expected this command, Hassan made off blithely, for here was a matter dear to his heart, and a quarrel out of which a song might be made to quiet his master in another, more fortunate hour.



ROBERT understood the Turkish character well enough to be quite sure that the Shah's ring and the imperial decree would not serve to keep him his command if he failed to enforce his authority by his personality. He did not wish to appear before the chiefs in council until he had learned something about them and the situation in general. To talk with Abdullah would be a mistake, because the Bokharians would conclude that he relied greatly on the minstrel.

Nur-Anim, the *mullah*, was a man wise beyond his years and a shrewd schemer, with the fire of fanaticism behind his close-set eyes. Robert had reasoned that he was the second most influential leader of the Bokharians; and he wished to question the *mullah* before Osman could talk with him, knowing well that he would be answered with half-truths and lies, out of which he might put together some guess as to why the sword and the ring had been bestowed upon him.

"Little time have we, Nur-Anim," he observed, refusing the offer of sweetmeats and fruit and a seat on the *mullah's* carpet, "to sit on the carpet of counsel. Is it not true that Muhammad was overthrown in the battle at the Takh-i-suleiman and lost half his men? And that his foes the Mongols are pursuing him apace?" Nay, they are not fifty leagues behind."

He had reasoned this out in the bath, judging that no one not harassed by pursuit would appoint a commander in the great city of Bokhara in such haste. Nur-Anim inclined his head.

"The Mongols are horsemen and ride swiftly," went on Robert, who had remembered what his guards gossiped, but chose to let Nur-Anim think he was well informed. "And they number full as many as the warriors within Bokhara."

"Nay, the sum of their strength—may Allah not prosper it—is somewhat greater than one hundred thousand."

The *mullah* considered.

"We have twenty thousand more under your orders, and the slaves besides."

"Who are the most experienced *atabegs*?"

"Kutchluk Khan, the Uzbek."

The *mullah* pronounced the name with distaste.

"Leader of the horsemen of Turan—a one-eyed wolf who can scent plunder farther than a vulture can see a dead horse. And next to him Jahan Khan, chief of the Kankalis, who can cut a sheep in halves with a simitar stroke. Sixty thousand follow them, and their pay takes the revenues of one-tenth Bokhara's trade."

There were others—the captain of the Persian mailed archers, and only one a noble of Khar. Robert began to see light. These leaders of the tribes were hired retainers. Gold was the tie that bound them—for the most part—to Muhammad, who had much gold. Their homes were elsewhere, and they lost little chance to quarrel and plot against each other.

If Muhammad had chosen one of them for ameer the jealousy of the others would have flared up, and the leader would have had his hands full with the pack. Whereas, led by a stranger, they might fight well; at least until the fighting around Bokhara was at an end, and Robert was glad to learn that he had such men among the garrison.

When he asked about the Mongols and the Manslayer, Nur-Anim could say only that the foes of Khar were wild tribesmen, infidels, who had emerged from the Himalayas, coming down from the Roof of the World like a black storm. Ignorant of the strength of Bokhara, and lacking siege engines, they would be crippled under the wall and cut up by Muhammad when the Shah raised a fresh army in the south.

"Where does Osman keep the treasure of the throne?" Robert asked suddenly.

He knew that the treasure was in the city, and that the Shah had not taken it away.

Nur-Anim started and suppressed a smile.

"Would Muhammad entrust the treasure of Khar to a wazir whose palace was surrounded by wolves like Kutchluk Khan?"

"Yet Osman knows the place of its hiding—as you do!"

"Am I a servant of the Shah—that I should keep the keys? Nay, I serve the mosque."

He glanced contemptuously at the Nazarene who could be foolish enough to ask such questions.

"What if the Mongols take the city? The wealth of Khar would fall into their hands."

"They would not find it. Not if they tore down the dungeons and let the water out of the tanks."

This explained somewhat the readiness with which Muhammad left his personal hoard of riches behind. And Robert fancied that if he had tried to bear off the treasure the *atabegs* and the garrison would have made trouble. Pretending disbelief, he asked if a guard should not be set about the place where the treasure was kept.

Nur-Anim turned aside to take up some sugared fruit.

"There be watchers that stand over the Throne of Gold. For a hundred moons they have watched, and not Osman himself would dare draw sword against them."

"With Allah are the keys of—the unseen."

Robert took his leave and went out, the *mullah* staring after him a long time and wondering whether the new ameer was really as simple as he seemed, for Nur-Anim was shrewder than others. The knight circled the precincts of the mosque, within which he was forbidden to set foot. He found an escort of a score of Kankalis and as many lean Turkomans awaiting him.

"*Yah khawand*," greeted a Kankali *beg* in a sleeved cloak of red satin, "by order of Jahan Khan do we, thy slaves, attend thee."

"O ameer!" growled a bearded Turani. "We also be here! Command us!"

They held his stirrup, then raced to their horses, and Robert rode off musing upon the power of an emperor that could raise an unknown warrior to such dignity. From his talk with the *mullah* he suspected that Nur-Anim was well acquainted with the hiding-place of the treasure—if he was not actually its keeper.

If Muhammad remained away from Bokhara and the city should be besieged for a long time, the possession of the

treasure would mean power to the holder. Robert did not intend to let Osman put his hand on it. One thing puzzled him; if Osman knew where it was hidden, what had kept the wazir from seizing the treasure? And who was the Manslayer, that men who had never set eyes upon him should fear him?

This question was answered for him sooner than he expected.

It was sunset before he left the *atabegs* after issuing his orders and finding out that they knew less than he did about the Mongols. In the courtyard a familiar voice hailed him.

"Now by the shank-bone of the blessed St. Dunstan, here be Master Robert!"

Will Bunsley sprang forward and grasped the knight's hand in both fists, grinning hugely. His hood and hose were somewhat the worse for wear, but he looked fat and hale; in fact a strong odor of wine of Shiraz hung about him.

"Praise be to St. Bacchus—who was a fair trencherman if he lacked of sainthood—that I ha' found thee. Abdullah brought me hither with tidings——"

"How left you Ellen and the blind priest?"

"Safe as an arrow in quiver, and chattering like magpies, God wot! Has Gabriel sounded his trumpet, lordling, or is the day of miracles at hand again?"

"*Yah khawand*," spoke up Abdullah impatiently, "the Mongols are within the gate."

"How?" The knight's eyes narrowed. "Where?"

"An envoy came to the Otrar gate to have speech with the ruler of the city."

"Ha—and no word from our outposts?"

The mins'-el snapped his fingers significantly and pointed to where in the gathering darkness red glows were visible in the distance—the reflection of fire upon rising columns of smoke. Bunsley followed his gesture with an appraising eye and explained cheerily.

"Abdullah doth fret because the light horsemen sent out from this citadel be somewhat heavy this night. Methinks they are, in a manner of speaking, dead, my lord, and divers paynim villages aflame on the horizon; by which token are we beset, and the goodly walls of this town invested, and I lack a bow, Master Robert. A fair long bow, seest thou, is a goodly thing

when a siege is toward, and I pray thee——"

But the knight waited not to hear how Bunsley had managed to gather his tidings. Putting his horse to a gallop, followed by his escort and the minstrel and archer, he made for the eastern gate. Riding with loose rein, he glanced about him and saw that in the bazaar the merchants were hurrying to gather the goods from their stalls and that men ran about shouting aimlessly. As when the Shah passed through, crowds of slaves and women lined the housetops to stare at the fires on the skyline. Torches were lighted by the Otrar gate, and here a body of Kankalis stood beyond spear-throw of three men.

At first sight of the three Robert thought that Abullah and Will had jested.

They were mounted on shaggy ponies not much larger than donkeys. They were clad in coarse wool and leather, loosened over their bare chests for coolness in the windless evening. Only one, the most powerful of the three, wore mail of sorts—a habergeon of iron plates knotted together with leather thongs.

The face of this rider was dark as burnished bronze and clean-cut as iron. His bare right arm was heavy with corded sinews, and the sword at his thigh was broad as an English battle-ax. He spoke in explosive gutturals, barely moving his lips, and one of the Moslems interpreted.

"The Mongol says he is Chatagai, a commander of a hundred. He says Genghis Khan offers the people of the city their lives."

The envoy glanced once at the crusader and his horse and spoke again.

"You are to bring the people from the walls to the plain," explained the Kankali, "with food and forage for a hundred thousand men and double that number of horses. He has gifts—a bow and an arrow. Look upon them; such bows are strong, such arrows shoot far."

Robert took the weapons in his hand and found the bow to be massive indeed, as heavy as a spear and as long as the English bows. The arrow was of cloth-yard length, its solid silver head pierced with holes.

"He says you can not cope with such weapons. If the gates are opened to Genghis Khan he will slay no man; if the gates are shut no man will live."

Curiously Robert studied the Mongol,

the first of that race he had seen. The warrior was strongly built, and horse and man remained as tranquil as if the rider had never known any other seat than the saddle. Chatagai stared for a long time at a dried and wrinkled head stuck upon a spear by the gate, seeming to take especial interest in this one grim remnant among the many skulls about the gate.

"Can you bend this bow?" Robert asked the archer.

"That can I," assented Will, who had been circling around the weapon like a dog that had sighted a side of venison.

He dismounted, examined the double stringing of twisted gut, and, exerting his strength in knee and arm, strung it swiftly.

"The bow is an honest longbow, but the arrow hath a lewd hammer head. Nevertheless if yonder churl can loose it, loose it I will——"

Planting his feet he gripped the feathered tip between fore and middle finger upon the string and drew it to his ear. The arrow flashed up into the night with a shrill, tuneful whistling that dwindled and passed beyond hearing. Chatagai grunted in approval.

"Now that is a pretty conceit!" observed the archer in surprise. "The holes in the silver made a fair flute—sa ha! Master Robert, grant me the bow for mine own, an it please thee."

The knight nodded, wishing that he could find a weapon to fit his own hand as easily, and turned to the Mongol.

"Tell him we can handle his weapons. Bid him say to his king that I hold Bokhara for Muhammad Shah, and the gates are closed to him."

Chatagai pointed at the head on the spear and spoke vehemently.

"*Yah khawand*," explained the Kankali, "this barbarian reminds you that the man whose head stands there was an envoy sent by Genghis Khan to Otrar. He dares to utter the warning that the person of an envoy was sacred before the time of Muhammad the Slave; he says God alone knows what will be the issue of this. *Ai-a*, shall we cut him down?"

"He goes free!" growled Robert.

The Mongol glanced briefly at the tall crusader and at Abdullah. Then, lifting his hand to his forehead and lips, he jerked the pony about in its tracks and swept through the gate with his men after him.

In an instant they had vanished into the dust and the night.

"That was ill done, my Frank," quoth the minstrel. "Until now you have walked forward through peril with a sure step, but now you have stumbled. Would you know the reason? Then dismiss your men beyond earshot, and we will talk—you and I alone—of the fate of an empire and the souls of a million men."

CHAPTER X

In the temples sit the priests, seeing all things, for they are slaves of the gods. Aye, the wisdom of the gods is one with Fate. Yet the lips of the priests are locked.

In the palace are the rose-faced women. Their hair is fragrant as a garden at dusk, and their fingers are like silver, for they are the slaves of a king. They have covered their lips with perfume and their hearts with secrecy.

One key only will unlock the hearts of the slaves, and that is Fear.—Persian proverb.

ROBERT ordered his followers to remain where they were and reined his horse through the gate after Abdullah until they were a stone's throw beyond the wall but still within the glow of the torches. The minstrel bore himself like a new man. Lute and pack were gone, and the good-nature had faded from his broad face; he sat restlessly in the high-peaked saddle, peering into the maw of the dark plain as if watching the retreating Mongols and eager to be after them.

"My quest is ended, O companion of the road. I have found you and brought you hither with honor enough for us both."

The crusader nodded and laughed.

"Verily you are something of a wizard, Abdullah. You led me hither to serve—as you said—the master of all men. And I serve Muhammad in a high place."

"My master—" Abdullah glanced on all sides—"is not Muhammad, who is a slave, served by slaves. I follow the Man-slayer."

"Genghis Khan?"

"Aye."

Robert's eyes narrowed. Here was a riddle, and he waited for the minstrel to explain it. And after perceiving that his friend would not speak, Abdullah went on.

"Hear then, lord companion, one last tale from the teller of tales. Before your mother bore you, there lived a tribal chief in the Gobi Desert, which is beyond the

Roof of the World. This man came to be called Genghis Khan later, but at that time he herded sheep and cattle and fought with the other tribes. One day there came to him a youth who could sing the hero-songs of the tribes, whose tongue was quick to boast, yet who drew back from no man's sword. This was Chepe Noyon, and they called him the Tiger.

"Again there came one who had the strength of a buffalo, who quaffed a cask of wine before setting it down, and Genghis Khan named him Subotai, or the Buffalo. When the other chiefs of the Mongols were in tatters and saw their herds thinned and their women carried off by their foes they hung their heads and rode away to another place; then Genghis Khan said to these two, the Tiger and the Buffalo, that they should be his chief men, and they kept at his side to spy out the way in front of him and to guard his back against arrows. Sometimes when they were stiff with wounds they fled to the mountains; they tasted the dregs of treachery, which was worse than the *buran*—the black wind-storm that sweeps the high desert and freezes men in the saddle."

The minstrel folded his arms and thought for a moment.

"When the dust rose from the plain or the mist descended from the sky these three did not lose the path they followed. In time came reward. The other tribes were trampled down. So they joined the Mongol standard, and Genghis Khan became leader of the Horde—the riders of the Gobi. They counted their herds by the hundred, and friends came to them from the white world of the north* and from the west and the south.

"When Cathay sent its bannermen against them they rode over the Great Wall, which was stronger than this."

The minstrel nodded at the wall of the city.

"So in time they humbled Cathay and rode their horses into the palaces of Yen-king, which is as great as three Bokharas. The wise men of Cathay served them, and they sat at table with Prester John of Asia. But Genghis Khan always kept the Tiger and the Buffalo near him and gave them honor. They were three brothers who would give up their horses, one to the other, in a battle.

*The Arctic Circle.

"Then the Gur-Khan, who was lord of the Roof of the World,* mustered his warriors, and Genghis Khan mounted his horse and went up against him. The Horde did not sit again upon the carpets of ease until they took the tents of the Gur-Khan.

"I am Chepe Noyon, the *orkhon*, leader of the right wing of the Horde, and brother-in-arms to Genghis Khan."

The minstrel drawled his name, and his eyes twinkled.

"From the Uighurs, who are Turks and scholars, I learned Arabic and heard of Khar; and the desire came upon me to ride down and look upon this Shah who was himself a slave.

"And I came because at the table of Prester John my master had heard of a race of Franks who had landed on the Moslem shores and made havoc with their swords. Hearing of their deeds, Genghis Khan laid a command on me. And the command was to fetch to him one of the Christian Franks who had a strong arm and a stout heart. This was because Genghis Khan wished to see for himself one of these warriors who had come over the seas, to overthrow all of the Moslems as he had struck the Cathayans. And I went, for a command is a command, even from a brother.

"Aye, the *orkhon* became a minstrel, and good sport was his. Muhammad, the Shah, after seeing him ride and shoot an arrow and empty a flagon of wine without setting it down, took him into favor—*not* knowing his name or race. Abdullah became the cup-companion of an emperor's revels—and bethought him of his mission. So he asked the way to the strongholds of the Franks, and Muhammad gave him a chain of jewels."

The Mongol—Robert still thought of him as Abdullah—laughed heartily at the jest, probably aware of what kind of a chain Muhammad would have set upon him if his true name had been known.

"Why," asked Robert, frowning, "did you bring me with you? There were greater knights in Syria."

"Of the very few who could have made the journey and lived, none except you had the heart to set forth. Oh, I have watched you and tested you, and my choice was good."

Chepe Noyon nodded reflectively and continued:

*The Himalayas.

"When we drew our reins to the *Sialak* I first heard of the war between Muhammad and Genghis Khan, and many lies were told me. But while you were a captive here I rode to Otrar and there learned the truth, and this is it:

"The Moslems, being traders and traffickers by nature, sent caravans to the Mongol empire to sell their wares. And so Genghis Khan sent an embassy to Muhammad to greet him. The Governor of Otrar was a fool, and he mistook the envoys for common men."

Robert thought of his first impression of Chatagai, and judged that this might easily happen.

"First the Governor of Otrar cut off their beards and then their heads," went on Chepe Noyon carelessly, "and kept their goods, to win Muhammad's favor. The head that hangs by this gate—" he pointed to the wall behind them—"was the brother of Chatagai. Genghis Khan will let no man of the Horde suffer injury unavenged. Aye, in our land a young woman might carry a sack of gold in her hand from Bish-balik to Kambalu, and she and the gold would be untouched. Nay, can there be two suns in the sky? War between the Shah and the Khan was certain, and now it has come to pass. Muhammad thought he was dealing with a nomad—a herdsman. So he was. But he thinks otherwise."

Throwing back his head, he laughed, white teeth flashing through his beard.

"By the white horse Kotwan, by the sky dancers, that was a ride we made, from your gate to this gate! These men of Khar be liars! Aye, the men of Khar have tasted fear, and the day is at hand when they will eat shame! Bokhara's wall will be level with the plain and herds will graze where the palaces stood."

Thinking of the prophecy of the dead *sheikh*, Robert held his peace.

"In Bokhara," resumed Chepe Noyon with relish, "I sang your praises, so that the Shah would hear, and demand to see you; then Osman would not dare put you to the torture as he planned. *Hi*—it happens oftentimes that a pit is dug for a tiger and an ox is trapped. Behold what happened. The *imams* and the *mullah* besought Muhammad to make you ameer of the city, to lead its defense. And now you may surrender to Genghis Khan, winning honor thereby. If Bokhara resists it will fare no better than Otrar."

Robert held up his hand.

"Is a promise made at sunrise to be broken at sundown?"

"Not the promise of a true man."

"Then I will defend Bokhara. My word is passed, and I will not unsay it."



FOR a full moment Chepe Noyon gazed up at the vault of the sky and sniffed into his nostrils the odor of the warm sand.

"Tell me this, O companion of the road. Can one man cast himself into the water and so stem the rush of a river in flood?"

The crusader was silent, having no answer, and Chepe Noyon did not seem ill pleased.

"The men of Khar are foxes, apt at stealing and flying to cover. I have lived among foxes on the steppe. You know not the depth of treachery in these Moslems as I do, who have sung my songs in *diwan* and *ruwan*—in council and feast. Each one lusts for the treasure of Khar."

"Is the throne of gold in Bokhara?"

"Aye, well hidden. It lies below ground—so much a drunken priest babbled. The wazir knows the way to it, but the priests stand guard over it, and Osman can not hew them down because his foes would cry sacrilege and muster enough Moslems to cut him and his men to pieces."

He laughed again shortly.

"O fool—to think they gave you honor in good faith! I overheard the talk between Muhammad and his advisors in the *righistan* where his elephant took stand. He would have waited to bear off the treasure, but Osman's men declared that he must leave the gold as surety that Bokhara would be relieved by him. He fears Osman and his own mother."

The Mongol looked long at Robert.

"Your eyes would be opened in time, but then it would be too late," he added. "The Shah left you behind as a figurehead, to deprive Osman of honor. The *mullah* took your part because he has a dread of the Kankalis—without some one to hold them in check. Osman is shrewd; you can not deal with him. Bokhara is doomed. We are clear of the gate. Ride then with me. I go to Genghis Khan and the fellowship of true men."

"Go!" said Robert briefly. "I will keep to my place."

"By the eyes of —!" cried the Mongol.

"Bold words, but what deeds will follow? Summon your men—or they will question you about me. *Hai*—I will lead them a chase."

He gathered up his reins, and the horse, sensing the purpose of its rider, reared impatiently.

"Nay, there is peace between us, for you saved my life."

"The debt is even, since you shielded me in Palestine. Now the sword is between us."

He lifted his muscular hand to his forehead and lips.

"*Ahatow koke Mongku-hai!*"

Although Robert did not know it, Chepe Noyon had given him the salute of the royal Mongols.

He listened a while to the drumming of hoofs on the baked clay of the road and then turned back to the gate reflectively. Abdullah, or Chepe Noyon, had been a wayward kind of friend, but Robert found that he missed the minstrel now that the Mongol was gone for good.



THE next day the men on the walls of Bokhara watched columns of Mongols move up from the east and spread out over the plain. All day the dust hung in clouds over masses of riders and herds of horses. The sun gleamed on the horns of cattle and the spears of the guards that shepherded thousands of captives from Otrar.

Robert, studying the array, saw that the Mongol warriors were all mounted, and all looked the same. He could not pick out the leaders. All wore the dust-stained leather and skins, and crude, rusted armor was on a few; here and there above the masses of the Horde moved immense standards—the horns of a stag or buffalo, trimmed with streaming tails, on long poles.

When the dust settled, lines of gray tents, built over a wooden framework, stood in place; back of these the captives and the cattle were herded on the open plain, with the heavy carts of the Horde forming fences around them. Robert bade Will try to count the warriors, and the yeoman estimated a trifle over a hundred thousand, the knight somewhat less.

"By the foul fiend, his cloven hoof!" muttered the archer. "Here is woundy work, i' faith. Our foes be quartered already, and the day is not yet done. A true

besieger now in Christendom would set about the work in seemly wise. Aye, he would first fashion him out of beams from his baggage-train a fair array of battering-engines—mangonels and trebuchets. Aye, stone-casters and rams—chats and foxes and eke towers of assault. Then in another week he would cut and fit together storming-ladders, and we would harry him with a-many cloth-yard shafts and cast back his ladders on his poll——”

“The Mongols lack siege-engines to my thinking, Master Will.”

“Then do they lack sense, Master Robert. Rede me this riddle: How may men ride horses up a wall? Or tear down the wall with their hands? ’Tis a thing impossible.”

He rubbed his long chin and scowled.

“This paynim wizarder hath the right o’ the matter. My lord, as he says, we should sally out and fall upon the foe, pikes and bills—sa ha!”

Osman had suggested a sortie of the garrison, arguing that the Bokharians outnumbered the Mongols. But Robert would not give assent to the plan. The Horde puzzled him, and he wished to see what they were about before trusting the Moslem soldiery against them on open ground.

Meanwhile the besiegers established mounted patrols that cut off all communication with the world outside, and this pleased the knight. The Shah had given him authority within Bokhara, and now no message could reach the city gainsaying this authority, and he meant to hold the command until the Mongols were beaten off. Beyond that he had made no plans.

By noon of the second day he noticed work in progress within the Mongol lines. Ox-sleds dragged up loads of earth, which was dumped along a front of a hundred yards, facing a portion of the wall where no towers stood. The captives labored at this spot, thousands of them, and the earth mound grew in height as it neared the wall.

“A causeway,” he explained to Will. “And a great one. They will push it nearer until it reaches the rampart of our wall.”

Whereupon he set to work to place on platforms built behind the menaced point, machines for casting sheaves of arrows and stones.

Throughout the night the Mongols kept at their labor, and the creaking of the carts sounded nearer. The defenders kindled

cressets on the rampart and contented themselves with shouted insults and laughter, while Robert slept in a tent under the wall and the archer dozed at the tent entrance. An hour before dawn the knight roused and went to the battlement.

The causeway had crept forward and mounted higher. Now it reared against the stars about a hundred feet back from the edge of the ditch. Robert sent a warrior for Jahan Khan, the leader of the Kankalis, and the *atabeg* came, rubbing the sleep from his eyes and cursing under his breath. He was a slender man, glittering from knee to throat in gilded mail. Pearls were sewn into his turban, and a heron’s plume marked him apart from his men. The right sleeve of his *khalat* was turned back on a supple shoulder and held by a diamond chain—this marking him for a notable swordsman—yet his eyes were heavy with the after-sleep of opium as he made his salaam.

“Take twice a hundred of your bowmen to the rampart,” ordered Robert without salutation, “and scatter the workers upon the mole.”

“*Mashallah!*”

The *atabeg* smiled.

“Am I a captain of bowmen? Bid me sally forth from the gates, and I will bring you the head of the Mongol chief on a spear.”

“You are a *bahator*, chief of thirty thousand. Can you check the advance of the causeway?”

Robert permitted the torchlight to flash on the signet ring he wore, and after a moment it was clear to the Kankali that the Nazarene meant to be obeyed. Robert dismissed him and ordered food to be brought to the tent. He broke his fast with keen relish, after instructing Will to mount to the wall and mark the progress made by the defenders.

The archer came back indignant. The Mongols had brought up to the head of the mound wooden frames upon which raw hides had been stretched. These frames were triangular in shape at the front and while they covered the besiegers, permitted earth and stones to be dumped down into the angle and the causeway moved forward as steadily as before. The Moslem archers with their short weapons were doing no damage at all.

“Bid the khan,” Robert ordered one of his followers, “set the engines to work.”

Response came back promptly that Jahan Khan declared the handling of stone-casters was not in the order given him.

"Then say to the khan that he is to come to my tent for a new order."

The knight was finishing the last of his rice and fruit and washing his hands when Jahan Khan approached and made as if to sit beside him.

"Stand," said Robert quietly, and while a hundred pairs of eyes watched intently he commanded two bowmen who came with the chief to chain Jahan Khan's arms and lead him away to his tent, there to guard him until relieved.

"What shame is this?" yelled the startled khan. "Am I dirt—I, Jahan Khan, the *bahator*?"

He gripped his simitar hilt convulsively, and a great sigh went up from the crowd that had gathered about them.

It was the first real test Robert had made of the power given him, and he sat on his carpet without stirring or looking up at the raging chief. If he had started to explain his action Jahan Khan might have pushed the quarrel to blows; if the crusader put hand to weapon the man would strike first and claim afterward that he had done so in defense of his life. In the shadows at his back he heard Will Bunsley slip an arrow from quiver.

After a while he motioned toward one of the younger *begs*, the tallest of the officers present. This sign among Moslems was as if Robert had beckoned, and after a second's hesitation the warrior strode forward, the crusader waiting until he saw fit to make a *salaam*.

"Ho, Moslems," snarled Jahan Khan, "this Nazarene takes upon his shoulders the mantle of the Shah, and that is a shame upon us all."

It was just too late to appeal to the religious zeal of the Kankalis, because now they had grown curious as to what Robert wanted of the younger *beg*. They pressed closer to stare, and after a little reflection Jahan Khan took his hand from his weapon, choosing to make the conflict one of words.

"Do you," Robert remarked to the attentive younger warrior, "take the leadership of the Kankalis, and fight as a man should. And you—" he turned to the loutful bowmen—"confine this *atabeg* until he has slept off the opium in his tent. You have leave to go!"

With that he turned his back and no more words were spoken. Jahan Khan was most surprised to argue, and one or two laughed as he went off. Robert had made good his authority against the most troublesome adherent of the wazir, and he knew that the account of the quarrel would be in every quarter of the city by dawn. It was well worth the risk he had taken.

To help the new leader, he sent Will Bunsley to the wall to show the Moslem archers how to loose their arrows in a high arc, to fall behind the protecting shield. The tumult above grew louder, and the grind and thud of catapult and mangonel sounded above the whistling of the arrows as the sun rose. Although the Mongols suffered from the fire, they pressed the work. The remnants of the captives were sent to the rear, and lines of armed men bore sacks of earth and stones up the causeway. The shields were wrecked, and for a time the bodies of men fell over the head of the causeway as thickly as the sacks.

Then arrows began to fly from the Mongol lines and sweep the battlement.

"Ha, lord," muttered Will, "mark how yonder shafts cleave the paynim shields! They be stoutly sped, with a true eye. Would I had fourscore Lincolnshire lads here upon the rampart!"

He sighed and presently uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

Under cover of the arrow-flights the Mongols began a new building-up of the causeway, which had ceased to move forward. The ox-carts were driven out of the camp by hundreds and steered up the incline.

Men with torches herded the bellowing animals up the causeway, and once the mass started forward, the oxen kept on, goaded by spears and the smoking torches. The first carts reached the brink of the embankment and rolled over and the rest came after in a steady stream of frantic beasts and splintering wagons. The arrows of the Moslems fell fruitlessly among them, and Robert saw that the carts were loaded with sand and stone. Men, caught in the rush of surging animals, stood up and shouted defiance at the wall. One powerful warrior in a tigerskin hurled his torch at the Kankalis and leaped out from the cart, to fall into the ditch and be crushed by the carts that came after him.

When the causeway stood upon the edge

of the ditch, as high as the wall and some twenty feet from it, the Mongols withdrew and quiet settled down. Robert left the Kankalis in charge opposite the causeway and rode to seek out Kutchluk Khan, who was camped across the city with his Turkomans.

The one-eyed chief came forward on foot, and the crusader did not dismount, for he was entitled to speak to the old warrior from the saddle.

"Take half your men—ten thousand of the best armed—and clear away the stalls and sheds of the *suk*. Quarter yourselves in the market-place which is in the center of the city. When a wide space is cleared, assemble your men and report to me. Can you reach any point in the wall, riding four abreast from the *suk*?"

"Allah pity any who stand in my way," boasted the Turkoman, grinning. "Are we to sally forth by the river? The Mongols have no more than a few riders on watch on the banks of the Syr."

"Who spoke first to you of a sally, O *atabeg*?"

Kutchluk Khan thought for a moment.

"'Twas Osman, or one of the cup-companions."

"You have seen many battles."

"By the ninety and nine holy names, I have seen rivers run with blood and the dust of the fighting hide the sun, O *ameer*."

"Have you ever given your men an order to ride whither your foes wished them to go?"

"Nay! Am I a smooth-faced boy, to listen to false talk?"

"Then why incline your heart to a sally? The Mongols fight best in the saddle, and on the open plain they would be at home."

The Turkoman grunted and fingered his beard, not too well pleased at the rebuke.

"Likewise," went on Robert bluntly, "tell me if Osman holds me in honor or not?"

"By the sword-hand of—he doth not. *Yah khawand*," Kutchluk laughed, baring yellow teeth, "he would be content to pour molten lead in your ears and make of your skull a drinking-cup. He has sworn he will."

"Sworn to whom?"

"To me and others, having gone among us with whispered talk. Slay him while the hour is propitious; it is all one to me, and my men would stand aside. I know not why the Shah chose you to be over me,

but Osman is an adder that strikes from a hole in the wall."

Kutchluk became good-humored again as he watched the crusader ride away. To his men he observed that the dog of a Nazarene was good steel shining from a dunghill.

"He knows well the worth of a mounted reserve of warriors such as we be. He hath given command for us to clear the bazaars—aye, and a way through every quarter of the city, so that we can mount and ride to his aid when he summons us. Allah send the wazir slay him not, for a feud comes to a head between them."

"*Inshallah*—then the door of looting is opened!"

The Turkomans, who had become quarrelsome from long idleness, waxed supremely content and prepared to go and plunder the stalls of the merchants. And by the time they were in saddle the words of the new *ameer* had been repeated so often that to a man they were ready to swear they had been ordered to loot.

CHAPTER XI

TWO MEN AND A PLAN

THE sun was a brazen ball hanging in a shroud of dust; and even the dogs of Bokhara had got up, panting, and left the alleys when Robert sought the dwelling where Ellen d'Ibelin and the blind priest were quartered. He found the narrow street filled with men who squatted where there was shade, and sweating horses. Pushing through, heedless of the scowls and imprecations that followed, he led his horse into the door of the garden that, behind a high clay wall, separated the house from the street.

It was a rose garden, bordered with jasmine and thyme. A fountain splashed where the shade was coolest, and about the fountain sat Osman and Hassan and several other followers of the wazir. Robert glanced toward the entrance of the house and saw Will Bunsley seated on the threshold with half a dozen weapons—the archer had a way of acquiring whatever dagger or sword struck his fancy without bothering to pay the owner—spread out on the stones beside him. Father Evagrius and the girl were not to be seen.

Osman had entered and brought in his

men unknown to the knight, and Robert waited for an explanation of his presence. The wazir rose leisurely and called the crusader by a dozen complimentary names—lord of the planets, perfection of chivalry, a second Iskander.

"I bear thee tidings, O ameer—good tidings. Because the heat in the alley without was a curse upon us, we made bold to enter thy garden."

His eye quested over the barred embrasures of the dwelling for a glimpse of the girl.

"And Hassan of the ready tongue hath made a song for thy mistress."

Robert gave his charger to Will to lead back to the stable and walked over to the Kharesmian.

"This house belongs to the damsel," he said slowly, "and I have not come here save to ask of her welfare. Send your buffoons from the garden and say your say in few words."

Osman hid his anger behind a smile, and Hassan laughed. When the cup-companions had departed the wazir motioned Robert to the carpet and sat beside him.

"You are not wise to tarnish the mirror of friendship—with me, O Nazarene. Our paths in Bokhara lie together, and we seek the same end of the road——"

"Your tidings?"

"Are that the Mongols have food and fodder for their horses sufficient for only three days. At the end of the three days they must enter Bokhara or strike their tents and go elsewhere."

"How had you this?"

"From my spies, who traffic with the barbarians under guise of shepherds and wood-carriers."

"No men have come into the city in two days."

"True. My followers send messages over the wall. They took from Bokhara pigeons that fly back when they are loosed, and the messages are written and bound to the claws of the pigeons."

He looked amused at the ignorance of the knight who had never heard of carrier pigeons or water clocks or naphtha.

"Lo," went on Osman agreeably, "the seal of fate is on the foreheads of the accursed Mongols. They can not complete their causeway, and their horses can not leap the wall elsewhere. Your skill will save Bokhara, for the three days will soon be at

an end. And then——" he hesitated—"what reward will be yours?"

Robert merely glanced at him inquiringly, carelessly at first, then attentively. Osman's hand shook and the pupils of his eyes were dark; a muscle twitched in his sallow cheek. In Cairo the crusader had seen Moslems who had taken an overdose of *bhang* or hashish, and they had looked like this.

"I will take," he observed suddenly, "two thousand pieces of gold."

"Two thousand! Thy palm would scarce be covered. Ask for more and it shall be thine! But not from the hand of Muhammad."

"How then?"

"I can show thee the treasure of Khar."

"Ha!"

Osman chuckled with secretive satisfaction.

"Aye, the throne of gold that an elephant scarce may bear on its back! *Miskuls* of gold piled in caskets and the caskets as many as the stones of this garden. Jade scattered upon the floor, and an ivory table——"

"Nay, it is hidden."

"Beneath a mosque. A hundred men might search every mosque in Bokhara for a twelvemonth and find naught. They could dig until they wearied their loins. Only one way leads to it."

Osman's thin arms clutched his stomach in uncontrollable excitement.

"*Ai-a*, there are blue sapphires and chains of rose pearls! Diamonds that could put to shame the light of the sun lie there in darkness—for how long?"

"Have you seen it?"

Robert's lean face was attentive.

"May Allah grant me joy for the pain! Aye, I have seen each thing that was sent down, under the eyes of the priests. And Muhammad the Slave, fears to bring his riches to the light. Were I the Shah I would keep it within my hand."

His thick lips drew back in a sneer. Taking Robert's silence for a reflection of his own greed, the wazir explained how tribute had been levied on the caliphs of Bagdad to get some of the finest of the jewels, and how Herat and Balkh had been searched to add to the treasure of Khar.

"And now you have a plan," nodded Robert.

Remembering the heat of the day and

the quivering nerves of the man beside him, he wondered how much the drug had affected Osman. Certainly the man was telling the truth.

Osman's plan was a bold one. The wazir dared not draw upon himself the rage of the Moslems by violating a mosque. He offered to tell Robert how to reach the entrance to the treasure vault. With some of the lawless Turkomans the crusader could beat off the priests and hold the mosque above the vault long enough to make away with the jewels and the bulk of the gold. Meanwhile Osman would assemble the Kankalis and would protect the Nazarene and his men from pursuit. Robert could take a part of the gold, leaving the rest with the wazir in his palace.

They would not make the attempt until the Mongols had been driven from the city. Robert could escape to the gates with his portion of the gold; his escort of hillmen would be sufficient to force a way through the pass. The Turkomans would like nothing better than such a venture; Khar was torn by strife, and Osman, with the treasure in hand and the city held by his men, would be able to raise his standard against Muhammad. The victory over the Mongols would heighten his influence—

"And if the Turkomans turn against me?"

"That is thy affair and risk. Thou art winning honor among them, O ameer, and they love a bold leader."

Robert remembered that Osman had said nothing of the maid of Ibelin. Probably the wazir would prove treacherous. Yet—with some of the treasure in his grasp and a horse under him and the road from the city clear—with a few of the wild tribesmen to follow him!

"If thou canst win a victory over the foe, Muhammad will soon put thee in thy shroud," whispered the Kharesmian. "That is ever his way."

This was probable. Osman's plan offered a desperate chance, but it stirred Robert's pulse. Nothing could have been said more to his liking. To ride through paynimry into Palestine with an emperor's ransom—to hew out a way of escape at the sword's point for Master Will, and the priest and the maid Ellen!

He looked at Osman. The man was dreaming, his cheeks flushed, his eyes dull.

Surely the wazir would lose nothing by making the attempt, and—by a stroke of fortune Robert might find himself at the head of an army, lord of Bokhara in truth. Weighed in the balance, Osman would be found wanting if the ownership of the treasure stirred up fighting.

"Seek me out when the Mongols have been scattered," Osman whispered. "Our paths lie together—and the end of the road is in sight."

Robert nodded and rose as a warrior entered the garden.

"*Yah khawand*," the newcomer salaamed, "there is brawling between the men of Kutchluk Khan and the merchants of the *suk*. The Turkomans are riding down the stalls and snatching plunder."

Osman rolled over on an elbow, secretly pleased at the trouble in store for the crusader, when he should attempt to interfere in the dispute.

"Are the riders clearing the market-place?" Robert asked the messenger.

"Allah—as kites clear bones."

"Good!" Robert nodded to the surprised wazir. "Go you and adjust the troubles of the merchants. They are in your charge."

Left alone, he stood by the fountain, his lips set in a harsh line. In his journey from Egypt to Bokhara he had met nothing but treachery and plotting. Even Abdullah had proved to be otherwise than he seemed—and Robert found that he missed Abdullah. Were there no men who kept faith? And why should a man keep faith?

CHAPTER XII

CONCERNING A MAID AND A SURCOAT

"**N**AY, Messire Long-Face, you may not shun our company this time as heretofore. For I have made ready a pudding of dates against your coming, and Master Will hath fetched some rare wine and, what is more, hath saved some of it."

So saying, Ellen took Robert's sword-belt and shield and pushed a chair forward to the table where supper was spread.

"Aye," growled the archer. "Wash, wipe, sit, eat, drink, wipe and depart. —'s blood, tall brother, dost never loosen thy belt and stretch thy legs under table like a Christian?"

He noticed that the girl's fingers trembled when she placed food and wine before the

knight and saw the ominous breaks made in the steel rings where arrows had struck his habergeon. Ellen had sent away the slaves who had been placed in the house, for she wished none but herself to tend Father Evagrius. And the priest lay on a mattress in another room. The heat of the day had wearied him, and he had declined to join them.

Robert watched her trip back and forth to clear the table and minister to the priest, and the lines of weariness fell away from his eyes. In truth had he longed for this sight of the maid of Ibelin, and several times had turned aside from his riding in Bokhara to pass through the street and listen for sound of her voice lifted in song.

And now he racked his brain for words, wishful that he had been raised in the court where apt speeches were to be learned. He looked expectantly at Will Bunsley, but the glib tongue of the yeoman was still, for a marvel. Meanwhile Ellen settled down on a cushion under a great candle and began to embroider a pattern on a fair sheet of linen stretched upon a small frame.

Her dark head was bent over her task. In this way had she whiled away the long hours of loneliness. Not once did she raise her eyes to the knight.

"*Damoiselle*."

Robert flushed and lowered his voice, for he had spoken as if addressing a squadron of men-at-arms.

"Prithee—my thanks for—the supper."

The long locks hid Ellen's face as she made answer quickly.

"*Messire*, my thanks for—saving my life."

"How? In sooth——"

"Indeed Master Will hath told me how you won us from the hands of the wazir."

"Nay——"

"And Father Evagrius did relate how you took his part in the tower dungeon."

"And sent the wizard a-packing from the courtyard before vespers," observed the archer with a nod.

"And so," went on the girl, "my lord, you have repaid me in most courteous wise for—the despite I put upon you. Once, my lord, I struck you. They tell me you are ever minded to pay a debt and to hold good your word. So do we render you—thanks!"

Suddenly Robert smiled, and when he smiled the tight, downcurving lips grew merry.

"I cry quittance, *damoiselle*. 'Twas a

fair good buffet you dealt me at our meeting, and a just one. Nay, child, hast forgotten our second meeting, beyond the Gates, by the desert sea? Your hand was gentle then—to a churl."

Ellen bent over her embroidery, and her fingers tangled in the thread. For when Robert had lain ill with fever she had often taken his head upon her knee and stroked his forehead until he slept. She wondered how much he remembered, and, observing with a swift, sidelong glance that he still smiled, she waxed haughty.

"My lord, I am no child. Next Martinmas I will be seventeen."

"My lady," Robert laughed, "I am no lord. Nay, you have spoiled the pattern. What is it?"

She untangled the thread and went to work anew, and he saw that she was embroidering a crimson cross upon a white background.

"Father Evagrius did ask it of me."

"A surcoat? Then the patriarch grows stronger?"

"He doth not mend."

She glanced anxiously toward the door of the other room.

"It was his wish that I make it for you."

Robert thought there was slight chance of his donning the garments of a knight again—or of leaving Bokhara alive. And what chance had the girl?

"See—'tis nearly finished."

She tilted the frame and surveyed it critically.

"The one you wore was sadly stained."

"'Tis a fair gift," he said, surprised that the girl should remember details of this meeting six months ago.

And he listened while she talked lightly of the strange slaves of Bokhara, the pretty garden and the music that she heard upon the river near at hand. Will, she said, had seldom been absent from the house; servants of the priests had brought her all she could wish of fruits and sweetmeats.

"And Will must not leave this place to seek the wall again," responded Robert gravely. "I give you in his charge."

"Nay, tall brother," put in the archer, "'twas she that sent me hence, saying—

"'Hie thee to my lord, and stand at his back; for he hath many foes, and if harm came to him——'"

"Why, our case would e'en be a hard one," interrupted Ellen swiftly.

Will shook his head doggedly.

"By all the saints, thy words were otherwise. I mind——"

"Be still!"

The girl's eyes flashed, and the work on the embroidery ceased altogether.

"I sent you for tidings of the siege. Will the wall withstand assault, Sir Robert?"

"We will hold it. And the foe must withdraw in three days."

Will Bunsley scratched his head.

"Now verily, and by thy leave, lord brother, thou didst hold forth contrariwise upon the rampart. Thou didst swear in good broad words that the Sooltan's men were overconfident, and the Mungals—or howsomever they be called—were brewing trickery for our quaffing——"

Robert reached out his foot under the table and, finding the yeoman's understanding too dense to heed a kick, frowned warningly.

"You have quaffed too many cups of Bokharian brewing to remember aught aright, Master Will."

"Nay, by St. Dunstan——"

"Curb thy tongue, rogue, and cool thy head in the garden for a while."

The archer went out, muttering under his breath, and Ellen laughed merrily.

"You would make light of our peril, Sir Robert. But you can not silence your eyes, and they were troubled."

She looked at him frankly.

"Will hath described the barbarians, and it would seem they fight best upon their horses. If I were leader of the besiegers I would take your wall upon the flank. I have seen a point where horsemen could enter a score abreast without dismounting or unbarring a gate."

Robert did not smile.

"If so—but where?"

"Where you and I entered Bokhara——" she paused to stitch the last thread in the cross—"the foe could swim their horses upon the river through the water gate."

"A chain hath been stretched across and a barrier made against boats, yet the thought is a good one. How came you to hit upon it?"

"When I was a *child*, *messire*, my father held command in the stronghold of Carcassonne for the queen, and I remember a siege and seeing the foemen swim their chargers across the moat."

She glanced at his hand where the great sapphire of the Shah's ring gleamed.

"Is that the talisman bestowed by the paynim king?"

"Lightly given."

Robert turned it on his finger, and lifted his head with sudden purpose.

"We have shared peril, you and I, and you have a heart for true words. Our chance of winning free from Bokhara with our lives is slight."

The brown eyes searched his without a trace of fear.

"Ah, let the archer attend you, *messire*. If—if harm befall you he should seek me out, for I would then have need of one arrow from his bow."

"You would have need of it."

Robert forced himself to speak coldly. Beholding her pride and her trust in him, he clenched his hands and strode the length of the chamber, to pause beside her.

"Nay, I am a wildling and worthless—as the peers of Palestine did maintain," he went on. "Hither came I to loot gold and gear and raise myself to a high place, and this day I plotted how to profit by the treachery of the wazir to his master. When I cast aside my spurs I put aside my vows and I have mocked the prayers of good Evagrius—thinking to drown memory of the past in a sea of blood. And this thing is true."

She began to loosen the long surcoat from the embroidery frame so that he could not see her face, and she made answer softly.

"Among the peers of Palestine—aye and France—who hath done the deeds of the Longsword? Is life, forsooth, such a little thing that we must spend our years in kitchen and hall, making love to some and quarreling with others?"

Robert frowned down at her, wondering, for this was a maid of many surprises.

"In my father's castle, *messire*, were many who painted their shields brightly and made a song of each slight dent won in the pleasant jousts. Faith, they tested their skill at romaunts and gestes in the banquet-hall, and they were bold in the hunt—and the war of words."

She smiled wistfully.

"My father was otherwise, and many a time did he tell me of the brave days of Richard of England. When he died I took the cross, being heavy with grief, and now am I in a paynim hold, long leagues from Jerusalem."

{ She stood up, tossing back her dark hair. "I would not have it otherwise. For now, *messire*, perchance, I share the last hours of a brave knight and true."

"O maid," Robert replied gruffly, being stirred by her bold words, "this is no fit place for a child of d'Ibelin to end her days."

"Then forsooth and verily," she cried, her mood changing lightly, "let us adventure forth and win us honor. Nay, the troubadours shall yet make a tale of us, and we will yet see Jerusalem. Master Will hath planned a plan for me whereby I may go forth when the time comes. 'Tis but a makeshift of a plan, and yet——"

Ellen turned and disappeared into her sleeping-chamber and emerged with her arms full of garments.

"—and yet 'twill make a man of a maid."

Her dark tresses were hidden by a light helmet of silvered steel, and a cotton drop that fell to her boyish shoulders.

"Well for me," she said gravely, "the Moslems of this quarter are slender men, for Will hath looted shamefully."

She held out a finely wrought haburgeon of delicate chain mail with a silk girdle, and wide damask pantaloons with embroidered slippers, and—smiling merrily—a long *khalat* of the richest purple.

"Ha, Master Robert," quoth the bowman, who had come in when he heard his name called, "she hath the bearing of a likely esquire-at-arms and a temper to boot. I have found for her a small shield and a bow suitable for her hand——"

"*Yah khawand*," interrupted Ellen blithely, "wilt take me for a companion upon your road—your road of peril?"

"Aye, verily," smiled the knight. "Yet no *khawand* am I, for that is 'lord and master.'"

"Lord and master," she whispered; and there was no mockery in her eager eyes.

"Harken," said Robert suddenly.

A sound as of a multitude of bees came through the open embrasures. The two men glanced at each other. To their trained ears the distant hum resolved itself into the mutter of kettle-drums and the clashing of cymbals mingled with the uproar of human voices. Robert picked up his sword-belt and helm.

"That would be a bruit upon the wall."

Swiftly he girdled on the long simitar he had chosen for lack of a better weapon of the size and weight to which he was ac-

customed. Ellen dropped her belongings and caught up the white surcoat.

"Wear this, my lord, for the sake of—of Evagrius, who hath blessed it."

Skilfully she slipped off the *khalat* that covered his mail and thrust the mantle over his shoulders, fastening his belt upon the outside. As he strode toward the garden he gripped her hand, and she skipped beside him to the outer gate.

"Fare you well—the good angels fight at your side!"

"Brave heart!" cried the knight. "Keep hidden until I return."

The alley door flew open, and a bearded Kankali peered within and saluted Robert as Will ran up with the saddled charger.

"Will the lord grant his servant permission——"

"Speak!"

"The barbarians have bridged the gap between the wall and the causeway. Aye, they have launched a storm, and Allah hath caused a battle to be."

Heedless of Robert's last advice, Ellen watched him ride away from the gate and waved farewell as he reached the turn in the alley.

"A fine mark hath thy mantle made of him," grumbled the archer, who was disappointed at being left behind. "Ah, for the shafts of the foe— Why, lass—why, as St. Dunstan hears me, thou art weeping!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORM

AS THEY trotted out of the alley Robert signed to the messenger to come up with him, and sent the man to command Kutchluk Khan to saddle his ponies and hold his men ready to ride. He pressed forward alone, seeking the shortest way to the wall. Here the alleys, odorous with fish and wool and stagnant water, twisted and turned, and his horse was forced to pick a way among heaps of refuse. White walls loomed out of the darkness and voices flung hearty curses after him in many languages.

He turned aside into a quarter where the wooden barrier was let down, and lights gleamed from lattices and the scent of incense and aloes was in the air. In gateways under great lanterns the tinted faces of women peered at him, and from a roof nearly over his head came the high-pitched song

of a Circassian girl with the monotonous accompaniment of a lute. In the labyrinth of the alleys the dwellers of Bokhara had come forth after the heat of the day, and Robert wondered whether in truth there could be fighting on the wall——

A woman's form, veiled and sinuous, moved toward him in the swaying walk of the Bokharian slave. Her henna-tinted hands drew back the veil, and he looked down into a face thin yet beautiful, and saw in the half-light of the stars eyes, darkened with *kohl*, wise with the unhallowed wisdom of Egypt.

Anklets tinkled as other girls fled with ripples of laughter from his horse. In his path a handsome boy caressed a lute, singing with a full throat, his head thrown back to the stars.

"Time passes and no man may stay it. This hour alone is thine. Turn not from the rose and its fairness, for thorns lie thick on the pathway!"

Robert reined in his horse and gripped the singer's shoulder.

"Where lies the wall?"

"I am Hassan," the boy responded with the gravity of the intoxicated. "Lo, the wall is not here, for this is the street of delightful hours."

He laughed at the set face of the crusader, and Robert loosed him, setting spurs to the charger. The spring of the horse sent the boy rolling in the dust that eddied up from the plunging hoofs.

Hassan sat up, muttering, and a veiled woman ran to his side from the deep shadow of a wall.

"The moon hath come down from the sky," cried the boy. "Ah——"

A thin length of steel darted into his side and was withdrawn. The woman's hand felt for his purse, which had jingled when he fell, and slipped it from his girdle. Then she merged again into the shadow.

Rising to his knees, Hassan felt about in the dust as if for something he had lost. Suddenly he screamed, and the song of the Circassian on the roof above ceased for a moment.



ROBERT rode over the bridge that spanned the river, and glanced to either side. Although the tumult on the wall was nearer, pleasure barges drifted along the banks, and Bokharian nobles made wagers as to the length of the

fighting. Passing through the gardens at a gallop, he began to hear the ululation of the Kankalis and the clashing of weapons. Dismounting among the tents behind the wall, he climbed a stairway to a tower and found the *beg* he had left in charge.

"*Yah khawand*," the man greeted him, "you are in good time. Watch."

The causeway was crowded with packed masses of Mongols, and more were moving up on foot from the lines of the camp where the drums and *nakars* kept up their clamor. At the head of the earth-mound beams had been thrust across the gap by the besiegers and hastily covered with spears, planks and hides. Over this bridge warriors were rushing the rampart, climbing upon the bodies of the slain.

They were half-naked, and those who had shields hurled them at the Moslems. Then they ran forward, stooping and smiting with axes and heavy, curved swords. Most of them fell under the arrows of the Kankalis, who shot from the wall and the nearest towers. The survivors were hurled back by spears and maces in the hands of the mailed defenders.

"Twice have we hewn down their bridge!" exclaimed the captain. "See where our stone-casters thin the numbers in the rear! Allah send victory!"

"But do you send for reinforcements from the palace," retorted Robert, watching two human tides beat against each other and a sprinkling of dark bodies, outflung from the press, drop into the beds of jasmine and roses underneath.

After a while he picked up his shield and ran down the stairs toward the wall. Greater weight of metal and steadiness of foot was needed here.

Thrusting through the struggling Moslems, he whipped out his sword, hewing his way well in among the Mongols without waiting to see if any of his own men followed. A mace crashed against his helmet, blurring his sight; a spear clanged on his shield. All around him there was a tearing, sobbing sound of tired men striving to rend each other, a snapping of wood and the moaning of the wounded underfoot, Moslems for the most part. The short, grim men who surged at him fought in silence.

Robert thrust the hilt of his sword into a snarling face, swept clear the space before him with his blade and felt himself caught about the legs. Stumbling, he dropped his

sword, and his mailed mitten grasped a short battle-ax on the stone surface of the wall. With this he smashed free of those who grappled him and gained his feet—a thing that few did who went down.

Now as he stood his ground he felt that shafts flew past him. A giant who rushed at him with open hands was transfixed by a long arrow and fell upon his feet. Another was pierced through the throat, so that the blow he aimed at Robert fell feebly against the steel casque. He could see, through the eyerits of his visor, the black mantles of the Kankalis on either hand, and the flash of their simitars. So in time he rested against the broken rampart and the bodies that lay upon it, panting, while the Mongol tide receded down the mole.

Still, however, was heard the summons of the drum and cymbal from the Mongol camp.

"*Yak khawand!*" the voice of the *beg* spoke at his side. "Evil tidings have come. The Mongols have struck in another place along the river. They stole up and smashed the chain with sledges and swam their horses between the towers of the river gate. They are slaying the men in the barges——"

"Send to Kutchluk Khan. Bid him ride with all his men to the river. Half his division should cross the bridge to this side. Then order five thousand Persian archers to the house-tops along the river to support the Turkomans! Haste!"

While he waited anxiously for news of the fight at the river he saw torches assembling in the Mongol camp. Fresh warriors walked to the lower end of the causeway and began to mount silently.

Under the flaming cressets of the wall he could make out that these were powerful men with the horns of beasts upon their fur caps. Those in front carried beams; behind these came ranks of swordsmen in rude iron armor, followed by masses of archers.

Robert realized that the Mongols had launched their main attack at the river under cover of the assault on the causeway. The fresh effort might mean that they had been checked by Kutchluk, or that they had been victorious behind him and meant to press home the attack. As yet he heard no fighting on the river near by, and he breathed a prayer that the one-eyed Turkoman had driven home his charge.

Again the Mongols thrust forward their beams and swarmed to the assault. An ar-

row struck the Kankali *beg* in the throat, and his body fell under the feet of his men.

"Are ye dogs?" Robert cried at the Moslems. "Come with me!"

He climbed the rampart, followed by all on the wall. The Mongols stood their ground, shouting and working havoc with their heavy weapons. With his long ax Robert cleared a space around him and planted his feet, dizzy with the blows that smashed in the steel of his helmet. Warm blood trickled down his ribs, and hot air seared his lungs.

Until his arms were wearied he stood his ground until the ax broke in his hands, when he fell to rallying the Moslems, who gave back on either side. The weariness crept into his brain, and he fancied he was standing at the head of a great stair up which writhed grimacing dwarfs with hands outstretched to drag him down into darkness.

A moment's pause enabled him to wipe the sweat from his eyes, and he saw Chepe Noyon clearly. The Mongol chief was halfway down the causeway beside a thick-set warrior. This man leaned on a spear, staring up at the fight without expression. His massive arms were bound at the biceps with gold rings, and he wore the long horns of a buffalo on his helmet.

When his glance fell on the knight the powerful Mongol tossed down his spear and strode up the causeway, thrusting friends and foes from his path as a man might push aside corn-stalks.

"Subotai—Subotai!" the nearest Mongols howled exultantly.

Robert fought for breath and looked about vainly for a weapon suited to his strength. Measuring the man with the buffalo horns and his own weariness, he felt that he would not be upon his feet for long.

"Yield thyself," Chepe Noyon's voice reached him through the uproar, "to the palladin, Subotai, and no shame is thine!"

"I yield to no man!" Robert cried and stepped forward.

A fresh onrush of Moslems from the wall swept between them as reinforcements came up at last from the Persian camp at the palace. Subotai crushed in the head of a warrior with his sword and leaped to one side, knocking two others from their feet. Then other Mongols sprang to the aid of their leader, who was drawn back, snarling angrily, as the besiegers were thrust back

by weight of numbers, and the incline cleared.

Robert watched until the fight on the causeway was over. For the first time he noticed that a broad streak of light ran along the horizon. The struggle had lasted through the night.

"O captain of thousands and companion of heroes," a glittering Persian addressed him respectfully, "the barbarians have been scattered at the river gate. They have left the waters thick with their dead, and Kutchluk Khan hath passed to the mercy of God with more than the half of his men."



WHEN the sun rose the sound of the drums ceased. The crusader sought his horse and climbed stiffly into the saddle, while throngs of Bokharians clustered about him and cried praises on the infidel ameer. Men fought for the privilege of taking the reins of his horse and leading him into the thick of the shouting mob, while women tossed roses from the rooftops.

"The barbarians are withdrawing their tents from the river!" A warrior stood up in his stirrups to call out. "*Hai*—they are scattered! The favor of Allah is with the faithful! The triumph is with Bokhara!"

Robert was aware that this rejoicing was ill-timed. Yet was he too weary with his hurts to think of the future. He had held the wall and had made good his word to Muhammad. So might Alexander in other days have ridden through the streets of the ancient city and received the salutes of his warriors.

The tumult died down when he reached the square where some Persian mounted archers were drawn up by the mosque. At their head was Jahan Khan, relieved of his chains, sitting his horse beside the litter of Osman. On the steps of the mosque stood the *mullah*, Nur-Anim, with a paper in his hand and an array of priests behind him. The Moslem who had been leading his horse withdrew, and the crusader halted before the steps of the Jumma.

"Greeting, O prince of warriors and paladin of swordsmen," Nur Anim said in his high voice. "Upon thee—the Salute! And now hear the word of Muhammad, Shah of shahs. This *firman*, this decree, he left with me to be read when victory had fallen to our arms."

Robert glanced at Jahan Khan, who had

been released without his order, and saw that the Kankali was staring at him curiously. A thousand eyes were on him as he sat his charger without helm or sword, with armor and sur-coat hacked and stained.

"It is the will of Muhammad Shah that Osman the wazir shall watch closely the deeds of the infidel leader of the garrison. If the Frank presumes to set foot in a mosque or to contrive aught against the treasure of Khar or raise his hand against a true believer he is to be put in chains and held captive until my return. If he resists this command he must be slain with a sword. The Peace upon my servants."

Robert's lips drew into a hard line, and he lifted his head angrily. Yet, thinking of the three who looked for his coming in the house of the fountain, he waited until he could speak calmly.

"Have I kept my word to Muhammad?"

"Aye," asserted Nur-Anim, rolling up the decree. "It was written that victory should be, and you have served fate."

"Then will the Shah make good his word to me?"

The *mullah* glanced at Osman, who raised himself on his elbow to speak; but the knight was before him.

"O Moslems, it is also written that he who breaks an oath is without honor. I have been guilty of none of these things. Who is to be my judge?"

"The wazir and I."

Robert rallied his wits and tried to shake off his weariness. His head pained him, and loss of blood made it hard to sit erect in the saddle. His eyes went from one face to another and read in them only exultant mockery—save for two or three of the officers who had served him on the wall.

"And who speaks against me?"

"I!" cried Osman loudly. "Give heed, O Moslems, to the ill deeds of this Frank. He schemed in his garden to steal the treasure of Khar from the mosque. I made a test of him, and witnesses without the wall heard."

A murmur of astonishment and anger came from the lips of those who listened.

"He cast dirt upon the beard of Jahan Khan," went on the wazir. "And the boy Hassan he slew in the night for no cause. Women saw it done and will testify."

Seeing clearly that Osman had determined to get rid of him, Robert held up his hand silently, and after a while—such was the prestige of the man who had defended the city against the Mongols—the murmurs quieted down.

"These be words, and lying words!" he cried. "Do ye believe, ye who have beheld my deeds?"

Some of the warriors looked about restlessly, and all eyes sought Nur-Anim. The *mullah* could have cast his influence for either man, and he chose to favor the wazir.

"Ye have heard the word of the Shah!"

He lifted the rolled parchment.

"I obey the word."

Robert tightened his rein and urged his horse slowly along the line of the Bokharians, glancing into each face. And now he beheld only sullen fanaticism and hatred. He had been tricked and cast aside when they believed his work was done. The anger that he held in check swept over him.

"O fools! I could have let the Mongols into the city. Who will lead you when I am gone?"

He ripped the signet ring from his finger and hurled it at Nur-Anim.

"Greet Muhammed with this, and do you find honor in it if you can."

"Take the dog of a Nazarene!"

Robert wheeled his horse and headed for the Persians who closed in on him. One man he threw from the saddle, and his charger shouldered another out of the way. Vainly he sought to win through the press to reach the three who awaited him in the house of the fountain. A warrior struck him on the head with a mace, and he fell under his rearing horse. A red mist gathered before his eyes, and powerful hands forced him to his feet. His wrists were bound behind him, and a cord was slipped over his head. The cord tightened, and he stumbled forward.

When his sight cleared he saw that he was being led out of the *rihistan* beside Osman's litter, and the wazir was leaning on his elbow the better to feast his eyes on his prisoner.

"Is thy memory so short, O Nazarene? Not three days ago you put yourself before me. You took from me the treasure, the diamond sheen, the *houri* out of paradise. Didst thou believe I had forgotten? Nay, I will take again the treasure that is more than gold—my eyes will take delight in the face that is fairer than diamonds. Ha, you will live to see that—dog of an unbeliever."

At the gate of his palace he paused to stare a moment longer at his captive.

"Put upon him the chain that may not

be loosened and the weight that may not be set down."

In the courtyard Robert was seized by slaves who riveted upon his wrists fetters to which chains were attached. These chains in turn supported a round ball of iron half as heavy as a man—a spiked ball, stained with dried blood.

"This is the morning star, Nazarene," Osman smiled, "for when you awake from sleep it lies near you, and when you would go forth it stirs not. Many who have looked upon it long have cursed the sun and prayed for death."

The slaves urged him toward a postern door of the tower. To obey, he was forced to pick up the weight and carry it, for the chains were too short to allow him to stand upright. He went forward, and the door closed on him, leaving him in darkness. But for a moment before the door was shut he heard the distant mutter of great drums and the clash of the Mongol cymbals.

CHAPTER XIV

For those who watch the highway and for those who sit by the carpet of sickness, the sands run slowly from the hour-glass, and the water lingers in the wheel of the water clock.

THAT day the *muezzin* did not call from the minarets at the noon hour. Will Bunsley and Ellen had grown accustomed to hearing the cry to prayer when the sun was at its highest point, and they looked up at the white spires without seeing turbaned figures in the tiny platforms that stood against the blue of the sky.

It was a cloudless day, and no wind stirred the spray of the fountain in the garden. Ellen hung about the path, making pretense of gathering flowers, but really listening with all her ears to the sounds in the street beyond the wall, to be ready to unbar the door the moment she heard Robert's ringing—

"Gate ho!"

She noticed that the noises of the street had changed. There was a steady mutter of voices and a shuffling of feet. The cries of children and the quarreling of loiterers were lacking. And no word came of Robert.

"Lady," quoth Will Bunsley, arranging his collection of arrows in sundry quivers, "the foe doth make a bruit with drum and horn, so methinks Sir Robert is yet upon the wall."

"But there is no fighting now."

Will scratched his head and looked up at the sky dubiously.

"Fighting? Nay, I think so. Armed bands do pass anigh us; so perchance Sir Robert hath driven the foe out upon the plain."

"Master Will! You know as well as I that my lord would permit of no sally!"

Squinting down an arrow, the archer paused to cut back the feathering a trifle. Every day of their stay in the garden he had come in with news of Robert's deeds and his health, and he was well aware that the maid loved the knight with an enduring love.

"Hum. Why then, being weary, my lord doth sleep. For, look ye, a night of sword-strokes doth weary a wight somewhat. Even I——"

Ellen smiled at him.

"You are a brave liar and a hardy rogue, Will Bunsley. Think you Sir Robert would sleep when the clarions were sounding? Oh, for one word——"

She broke off to listen to the murmur outside the gate, her brown eyes dark with anxiety, for Ellen herself had not slept while the clarions were heard upon the wall.

"Why, lass, he will be here anon," nodded the archer confidently. "Aye, he sought you out i' the mountain pass and in the wizard's palace. So go thou within and change to thy warrior dress to greet him."

The girl knew that Will was hiding his misgivings and wished her to be clad as a man because he thought danger was at hand. So she went to her chamber and donned the light mail and steel cap, thrusting her hair beneath the cotton drop. Casting the silk *khalat* over her shoulders, she hurried forth to the garden. For a moment her glance quested in search of Will, who had disappeared. Then she heard his voice, loud with amazement.

"Lass—lass! The good father sees—he sees! A miracle hath come to pass!"

Ellen caught her breath, and, realizing better than the yeoman what his words portended, ran swiftly to the room of Father Evagrius. The patriarch was sitting up, one hand clasping his thin chest, the other outstretched in the air; his emaciated face was flushed, and his lips quivered. Will Bunsley stood agape in a far corner.

"*Monseigneur!*" cried the girl.

The eyes of the priest held a new light;

no longer did they wander or lift viewlessly to the sky. They were fixed on the white wall, where the sunlight struck through a latticed embrasure.

"The mercy of God!"

Evagrius framed the words with difficulty, and then his voice grew clearer.

"I see the light of the sun! O blessed and fortunate! Nay, this is no abode of pay-nims!"

He glanced into the shadows, and Ellen sank on her knees beside him, supporting his shoulders with her arm. The hand of the patriarch felt her mailed throat and the steel head-piece.

"Who attends me? I can not see you, but surely you must be one of the warriors of the Sepulcher. Behold——" his finger darted at the wall—"the tomb! Aye, the sun is bright on the Via Dolorosa and the walls of the blessed city. I can see the en-sign of the cross——there."

His eyes closed, and Ellen felt under her hand the heat of the fever that had made him delirious. Yet his lips twitched in a ceaseless smile.

"Happy are those who have taken up the cross!" he cried again, stretching out his thin arms. "They are at home in Jerusalem, and the weary lie here at rest. O warrior, will you come with me to the tomb—yonder, a little way?"

"Aye, father," said Ellen, bowing her head.

"And bring the good knight Robert. For the Lord hath called to him the mighty men, and they come from the far places."

"Aye, father."

She eased the patriarch back to his couch and looked steadily into his face. After a moment she bent forward to close the blind man's eyes and to cross his hands on his breast.

"Evagrius hath died," she said to the archer, who had drawn nearer uncertainly.

"Nay," objected Will. "A moment ago he could see. 'Here is a miracle,' said I, and a miracle it was."

"Perchance it was, Master Will," assented the girl. "Now do you leave me, for a prayer must be said and candles placed fittingly. And then—what can we do?"

Will sought the garden and halted in his tracks. A dull crashing resounded from the alley, and the outer door quivered back against its bars. The wood splintered, and the head of an ax showed through. Catching

up his bow, the archer strung it swiftly. Kneeling in the threshold of the house, he emptied a quiver at his foot and stuck the heads of a score of arrows in the earth in front of him.

"So-ho!" he muttered. "No friend knocks in that fashion."

The door fell into fragments, and the bars were cast aside by a tall Kankali who strode into the garden with drawn simitar. The light of the afternoon sun was full in the man's eyes, and he saw nothing of the archer until Will's bow snapped and a shaft struck the warrior's throat, knocking him down.

Two others leaped over the dying man and started across the garden. Will sent a shaft fairly between the eyes of the first. The other reached the fountain, where an arrow clanged into the mail above his girdle, and he plunged into the water. An angry shout from the alley showed that the fall of the three had been observed, and the door remained vacant for a moment. Will heard Ellen's step behind him and called over his shoulder.

"We are beset by the paynims. Go thou to the roof with thy bow, but keep below the parapet. Watch lest they climb the wall in the rear."

"Who are they?"

"What matter—ha!"

The yeoman drew a shaft to his ear and paused alertly. Two shields had been thrust across the opening on the alley side, and behind this protection two warriors knelt hastily, bow in hand. They could not see Will, and he waited until they had sped their shafts hurriedly and without harm to him.

The attempt was repeated, more boldly this time, and an arrow thudded into the empty quiver at his foot. Evidently the assailants hoped that they had wounded the archer, because a Kankali ran into the garden, keeping his head down prudently so that the steel helmet protected his face. His round shield he held in front of his body.

Will rose to his feet and loosed an arrow that ripped through the tough hide target and pierced deep into the warrior's chest. The man stumbled and lay where he fell.

"They will eke be wiser now," he muttered, fearful that the Moslems would scatter around the wall and climb it out of his range of vision. "What tidings, my lady?" he called cheerily.

"I can see naught beyond the wall. What happened in the garden?"

"A fat man hath gone to pare the —'s! hoofs! His comrades hang back. Nay, I think they are brewing mischief."

He heard feet running in the alley, and a loud outcry. Then a couple of Kankalis swept past as if the fiend Will had invoked were after them. Ellen appeared at his side, fearful that he had been hurt, and they ventured a few steps into the garden.

Horses trotted up from somewhere and baled outside the wall. Through the door stepped a man who was not a Kankali—a warrior whose long beard swept his bare chest, whose iron helm bore the upper portion of a tiger's head by way of a crest and whose wide shoulders were wrapped in the tigerskin. Will fingered his bow, planting himself before the girl. But Ellen caught his arm with a cry of amazement.

"'Tis Abdullah, the minstrel!"

Abdullah, or Chepe Noyon, the Tiger Lord, glanced at them and laughed. Then, while a dozen squat Mongols crowded after him, he began to turn over the bodies in the garden to look into the faces, evidently seeking to identify one of them.

When he reached the last of the Kankalis, who had been smitten through the shield, he bent over and uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. The dead man was Osman, the wazir.

Chepe Noyon signed to one of his followers, who promptly struck off the head of the Moslem minister. Then the Mongols crowded around the two Christians to stare and finger Will's tattered garments. The archer faced them defiantly, while Chepe Noyon studied Ellen curiously. Resistance was useless, and the girl was the first to throw down her weapons.

CHAPTER XV

THE THRONE OF GOLD

ROBERT had been without sleep for a day and a night and the part of another day, so he had not been an hour in his dungeon before his head sank to the rushes and he fell into a dreamless stupor.

The opening of the door brought him back to consciousness, but his wounds ached and his limbs were stiff. He heard guttural voices that dwindled and left him to sit up and to wonder first why he was in the

dungeon and then—as the events of the last morning flashed back into his mind—why the door had been opened. The men who had come to his cell had merely glanced in and passed on.

He tried to get up and cursed the massive weight that cramped his arms. Picking up the spiked ball with an effort, he went to the door and thrust it wide.

The sun was setting, and the minarets of Bokhara were touched with the last crimson of the western sky. For a while he gazed at the courtyard and listened, suspecting some new trick of the wazir's making. Every detail of the place was familiar to him, and yet everything was different. It was the hour of evening prayer, but no call of the *muazzin* was to be heard; no lights hung in the palace gardens, and no men moved about the courtyard. The gate stood open.

Robert picked up the morning star and walked out into the street, and his eyes puckered thoughtfully. The street was deserted. Opposite him was a potter's bench with a half-formed jar on the stone wheel and water in the bowl beside it. A dog trotted across the alley and entered the door of a shop. Bokhara was wrapped in silence. Although he listened Robert could not hear even the whine of a beggar or the grunting of a camel. He surveyed the alley reflectively, wondering if his senses had not failed him. Then he set out to walk painfully toward the house where he had left Ellen and Will.

At the first crossing, near the *rightistan*, he heard horses approach, and blinked at the glare of torches. Three riders came up and reined in when they saw him—slant-eyed, squat warriors with spears slung at their backs. They wore wolfskin cloaks and rode small, long-haired ponies, and Robert saw that they were Mongols. They exchanged a few words, and one started to draw his sword, when another uttered an exclamation and pointed to the knight's surcoat on which the red cross was still to be made out. Robert caught the word "*noyon*"—chief—and guessed that the warrior had recognized him as the leader of the garrison.

They stared indifferently at his chains and the iron ball, and motioned him to accompany them, slowing their ponies to a walk to keep about him.

Entering the *rightistan*, they joined other mounted patrols and headed for the Jumma mosque. At the steps two of the warriors

took Robert by the arms and rode their ponies up the stair into the pillared transept. Here they dismounted and led him within the mosque itself, where torches glittered on white marble and gold and the great tiles of the flooring. Gathered near the entrance he found groups of the chief *imams* and *khadis*. They were holding the bridles of several Mongol ponies. Beside the noblemen were ranged scores of the Shah's singing-girls, guarded by armed Mongols. Robert asked the nearest Moslem what had taken place in the city. The man only seized his beard in both hands and bowed his head.

"Hush!" whispered another. "The wrath of God stands near us."

"Where are the people of Bokhara?"

"Where is the snow of last year? Wol Wol! All were ordered out on the plain save the *grandees*, and we—we must tend the conqueror's horses, aye, feed them with hay from the Koran boxes. *Ai-a-ai-a!*"

"How did the Mongols enter the city?"

The *khadi* glanced fearfully toward the rear of the mosque and tore at his beard. His plump cheeks glistened with sweat.

"How? Allah be compassionate to his servants! They rode in through the gates before sunset, for the keys of Bokhara were rendered up to them."

"Why?"

Now the man looked at Robert and knew him.

"It happened thus, O captain of many. Osman and Jahan Khan decided on a sortie of the garrison, for the Mongols seemed to be withdrawing in confusion. Nay, it was a trick. When the warriors of Islam rode forth they were cut to pieces as a hare is torn by dogs. The plain is covered with the bodies of the Kankalis and Persians, and Jahan Khan fled toward Herat like a leaf before the wind. Then we within the city gave up the keys on promise of our lives."

Robert started and gripped the man's shoulder.

"What of the other Franks?"

The *khadi* moaned.

"What of one bird in a storm? Ask of him if you dare!"

A solitary rider sat in the saddle of a white horse under the colored dome of the mosque, apart from the captives. He wore no armor or insignia of rank. In the shadows at the rear of the edifice he might have been a statue cast out of iron. Even the white

horse was motionless on the black marble flooring.

"Who is he?" Robert asked.

"He is the scourge that has come out of the desert. Aye, the Great Khan, Genghis Khan."

The crusader glanced with quick interest at the conqueror, measuring the spread of the high shoulders and the sinews of wrist and forearm. Only the keen black eyes of the Mongol moved, and Robert fancied they glistened with amusement when they lingered on the grandees holding the horses.

A touch of his arm made him turn, and he saw Chepe Noyon standing beside him; but a Chepe Noyon that no longer resembled Abdullah, the teller of tales. The chieftain had cast back upon his shoulders the tiger muzzle, and Robert noticed that the hair on his head had been shaved except for a long scalp-lock that fell from his skull to the tigerskin.

"Where are the Nazarene maid and the archer?" Robert asked him.

Chepe Noyon chewed his lip reflectively, glancing from Genghis Khan to the *imams* who were tending the ponies. Throughout the mosque there was only to be heard the snapping of the torches and the munching of the horses that were feeding from the Koran boxes.

"From that high place Nur-Anim was accustomed to read the book of the Moslems."

Chepe Noyon nodded at a miniature tower, some dozen feet in height, that rose behind Genghis Khan. It was shaped like a minaret with a platform and cupola in which rested on a sandalwood stand a massive Koran.

"There is the book that no one but Nur-Anim might touch."

He looked at Robert reflectively.

"Your archer slew Osman, which was a good deed. I have him and the maid in man's attire, in my tent. I came upon them when I followed the wazir. But Nur-Anim I have not yet unearthed. In all Bokhara there is no trace of his passing, yet he must have fled from the city."

He snarled in sudden anger.

"What avails the capture of the city without Nur-Anim?"

"The *mullah*? Nay, he is harmless——"

"As the fangs of an adder! You were slow to see the evil in these servants of the Shah. Osman was no more than a cup-shot fool, and he died like one, striving to put his

hand on a woman. Nur-Anim used him for a moment, no more. The *mullah* was the true master of Bokhara, for he had the treasure in his hands."

Chepe Noyon laughed grimly.

"The *mullah* persuaded the Shah to leave the treasure in the hands of their god, Allah. I have spoken with one or two of his priests with a dagger in my hand, and I know that Nur-Anim wanted you to be ameer because he feared Kutchluk Khan, who was a wolf. Then he overthrew you and whispered to Osman and Jahan Khan to lead forth the army, and they knew no better."

He made a gesture as of gathering up sand in his fist and casting it into the air.

"A little trick served to break their formation, and then the Horde rode them down."

"But why did Nur-Anim——"

"O little son, you held the wall like a man and a *noyon*. But you know not the ways of snakes. Muhammad is already shaken, and his power grows less; Bokhara will be razed to the plain, yet the treasure is hidden beneath it, and Nur-Anim knows the hiding-place. When we have passed on he will come out and dig it up again. A hundred thousand have died that he might do this thing."

A warrior spoke to the chief, who took Robert's arm.

"Genghis Khan summons you."

Robert took up his shackles and stepped forward at once, Chepe Noyon walking at his side.

"I can not aid you now. Speak boldly!"

A sigh of relief went up from the Moslems as Robert was singled out to face the man on the white horse, but he himself was too weary to feel either excitement or fear. For several moments he waited by the muzzle of the Khan's pony, while the eyes of Genghis rested on him. Chepe Noyon, after making his salutation, stood to one side to act as interpreter.

"The Khan asks," he said briefly, "if you are one of the heroes of the Franks who came over the sea?"

"I am a Frank."

"Are you he who held the wall against our assault?"

"Aye."

The gray eyes of the knight sought the broad, lined face that looked down at him, utterly without expression.

"And if treachery had not put these chains upon me I would have kept the wall."

Chepe Noyon interpreted, and the old conqueror glanced at the iron weight that hung from Robert's wrists. He spoke slowly in his deep gutturals and raised his hand.

"He says—" the Tiger Lord drew Robert aside—"that no man has stood so long before the rush of the Horde. The chains are to be taken off, and you are to eat and sleep. On the morrow you will be matched against a man as great in strength as you. The Khan will watch. If you slay the other, you are free to go where you will."



AS ROBERT turned to go back to his guards Chepe Noyon signed for him to remain. The white horse of Genghis Khan had grown restive and was pawing the marble flooring. As if the mood of the horse had aroused the chieftain, Genghis turned in the saddle and pointed at the Moslem grandees, his dark eyes snapping with anger.

"O ye *imams* and *khadis*," cried Chepe Noyon, translating the words, "the Khan bids you to reveal the riches that are hidden in the ground. What is above-ground his men will care for. Who among you knows the hiding-place of the treasure of Khar?"

The nobles answered with many voices that they knew nothing of the hiding-place. Some cast themselves on their knees, and the echoes of their cries were flung back by the dome in the roof.

"We have fire and steel that will wring the truth from you," pointed out Chepe Noyon passionately.

Several began to relate how their personal hoards might be discovered, but all insisted that Nur-Anim alone could lead the Mongols to the treasure of Muhammad. Chepe Noyon turned to Robert.

"The throne of gold and the jewels must be near to a mosque," he observed. "Have you come upon the way to Nur-Anim's secret?"

"I think it lies beneath the grounds of this mosque. Osman disclosed as much."

Robert, in fact, cared little what became of the hoard. It had passed out of his reach, and his only wish was that Muhammad and the Moslems would not regain it, possibly to use it against the crusaders in later years.

Chepe Noyon spoke briefly with Genghis Khan.

"The floor at this place rings strangely when the horse stamps. Is there a space beneath?"

Echoes sprang to life as some of the priests of the mosque made answer that there was no chamber beneath.

"I would believe them more readily if some had said they did not know," muttered the Tiger Lord, frowning. "Why do you think it is near to us, O little son?"

"Because Nur-Anim must have kept it where he could watch, and his own dwelling is small and scanty. The garden of the mosque would not be safe. Besides, Muhammad came hither when he entered Bokhara."

He paused to watch Genghis Khan who, without touching the reins, was kneeling his pony back and forth over the square of black marble. And it did seem to Robert that the tread of the horse echoed differently when it passed under the reader's stand. Genghis Khan dismounted and moved to the tower, as clumsy on foot as he was graceful in the saddle.

He climbed the tiled steps to the cupola, while Chepe Noyon issued a command to the Mongol warriors about the door. A score of them went out, to return quickly with heavy blacksmith sledges.

Meanwhile Genghis Khan had caught up the great Koran, which must have weighed as much as Robert's shackles and ball, and poised it over his head. Then he flung it out, over the edge of the stand, and it crashed down on the marble beneath.

"He said," muttered Chepe Noyon to the knight, "that if the Kharezmians had spent their gold for walls along the river and if they had fed the army of the beggars and the sick in the city they would not be captives now."

Once more the echoes of the vast interior started up as the Mongols began to smash at the marble—some kneeling upon the flooring, from which the white horse drew back at once, others standing about the walls, pounding down the gold plaques with the Arabic inscriptions.

The Moslems, who had quivered and crouched as the great Koran was flung down, fell on their faces beating with their fists against the tiles. The women huddled together in a corner, and the night wind whisking in through the wide-flung portals

moaned an under-note to the hideous clamor of the echoes; but no thunderbolt came down from the sky to crush the man who had thrown under the legs of his horse the sacred Koran of the Jumma.

Robert thought of the Gates in the Mountains, that had barred the way to Khar for a thousand years. Now the bars were falling. Whole segments of mosaic crumpled up and rained down from the walls, and the gold plates toppled out and down.

In spite of his weariness and his hunger Robert drew closer to the men with the hammers. He was seeing the empire of Islam cracked asunder—something that the crusaders had striven in vain to bring to pass for a hundred years; and his pulse leaped. The thin marble blocks were split into fragments on the floor and tossed aside, revealing an under surface of brick. Once more the hammers went to work, and more torches were brought.

Two of the sledges smashed through the brick at the same time, and the Mongols leaped back. The square that they had uncovered sagged and disappeared in a cloud of dust, leaving a hole wider than a man could leap.

Chepe Noyon flung back his head and roared with laughter. Robert peered down, dazzled by the reflection of the torches on a hundred glittering surfaces. As the dust eddied and settled, he beheld a chamber of considerable size below the floor of the mosque. Near the opening stood a long ivory table, covered with silver, bronze and jade caskets.

He was looking at the riches of Islam, the spoil of Bagdad and Nineveh—the plunder of Balkh and India. It shone from the hilts of weapons hung upon the walls of the vault—it sparkled from the piles of jars and incense holders, of necklaces and anklets upon the floor. And almost under the opening gleamed the throne of gold.

Who had fashioned it and how long ago, the knight could not know. Assuredly it was older than the wall of Bokhara, for in the mas-y metal of it were inscribed arrows and darts and emblems of another age. Perhaps Alexander and perhaps Darius had sat upon it. But just then—and Chepe Noyon had been the first to perceive him—Nur-Anim crouched against it, staring up with writhing lips, a dagger gripped in his hand.

"Ho, the snake is in its hole!" cried the Tiger Lord.

Some food and a water-sack and several candles showed that the *mullah* had planned to lie hidden for some time. Robert noticed steps running up into a corridor near the priest, and judged that they led to a door concealed somewhere in the reader's stand.

Chepe Noyon drew his sword at a sign from Genghis Khan. Turning to Robert, he explained swiftly that the knight was to go to a tent in the Mongol camp with the warriors who had brought him to the mosque.

"What of the maid? I must see her," Robert demanded.

"You will see her on the morrow."

With that the chieftain leaped bodily into the chamber below, and Robert saw Nur-Anim spring into the dark corridor. He heard Chepe Noyon laugh again, and as he moved away to join his guards the Moslem grandees moaned and gripped their beards. From the opening in the floor arose a scream that swelled and dwindled to a hoarse babble.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ROAD AND ITS END

IT WAS late when Robert was led into a small woolen tent pitched near the horse lines of the Mongol camp, and the rivets of his fetters were struck off by a smith. But he did not go to sleep at once.

The warriors had sought out one who knew a smattering of Arabic, and of him the knight requested water and rice and mutton, and ate until the Mongols smiled approval, believing it a sign of a strong heart that a man should eat mightily before going forth to fight for his life. They asked what weapon he would select, and brought him a varied collection of Moslem mail and swords.

From these the knight selected a strong haburgeon, and tossed away his own, that had many broken links. He refused all the simitars, and the Mongols inquired if he wanted one of their shorter swords.

Robert, however, had determined to fashion a weapon which would not break in the combat on the morrow—as his simitar and ax had broken on the wall—and which would decide the issue swiftly. Hope had forsaken him, and he longed only for two things—the strength to stand against the champion selected by the Mongols, and a sight of Ellen.

He called for a stout staff of hard, seasoned wood as thick as his wrist, and the smith brought him one reenforced with iron—the broken handle of a great mace. Then Robert took up the spiked knob and the chains from which his wrists had been freed and set to work grimly to fit the fetters at the ends of the chains upon the staff.

The Mongols watched the making of this unwonted weapon with attentive interest. They had orders to deny the champion of the Franks no request, and the smith helped find bolts that would fit the holes in the shackles.

When the work was finished, Robert had the mace-handle attached to the two chains, each about a foot long. From these chains swung the spiked knob of iron that had been his gift from Osman. The warriors took turns trying to swing it around their heads, and only a few could do so, with an effort.

"What is this thing?" they asked of the interpreter.

Robert smiled.

"It is the morning star."

"How is that?"

He thrust the handle in the water-cask so that the wood would swell and grip tighter the iron bands.

"When it falls a man dies."

The guards squatted down to watch while he slept on a pile of skins. And in whispers, not to disturb him, the Mongols discussed his stature and mighty muscles, the lines in his dark face that were deep even in slumber. They pointed to the tawny mane of yellow hair and shook their heads, for they had never seen a man like this. With equal interest they watched the morning star soaking in the water cask, certain that this was some kind of magic.



WHEN the sun scattered the mists on the sandy plain, throngs of Mongol warriors moved toward the standard of Genghis Khan. They squatted down, keeping clear a space some hundred yards square in front of the pole that bore the horns and the yak-tails. A little later the chieftains of the Horde walked over from their tents, and all raised their arms as the Khan appeared in the entrance of his pavilion and mounted a pony.

It was ever his custom, bred of a life of constant warfare, to be in the saddle; and he was never known to walk when a horse was at hand.

After he had taken his place at the edge of the cleared ground and received the greetings of the palladins, Chepe Noyon rode up and dismounted. Two warriors with drawn swords forced a way through the ranks of watchers at one end of the square and halted. Robert, clad in mail from knee to throat, walked between them, bearing the new mace in his hand, and a thousand pairs of eyes fastened on it curiously.

The knight swept a quick glance at the lines of silent warriors, who sat or stood where they willed, each with a spear or sword at hand—at the savage standard and the deserted wall of the city that loomed above the round tents of the Horde, and the pall of smoke that rose behind the walls and overspread the sky. He stood erect, smiling a little.

For here was no fair list, fashioned for jousting, with heralds and poursuivants to tend the combatants and enforce the rules of the tournament—no minstrels to make memorable the names of the men who bore themselves well. He rested the spiked knob on the earth and turned to where a commotion at the other end of the square announced the coming of the antagonist whom he was ordered to overthrow if he would live longer.

He saw a tall figure, glistening in the finest of Damascus mail, and a crested helm. The man left his guards and moved toward the knight, who noticed that he carried only a battle-ax, a heavy blade with a long haft.

"Will Bunsley!" cried Robert, taking a pace forward.

It was the archer, and he was pale to the lips as he moved closer. Within easy speaking distance he paused to wipe his forehead and to lean on his ax.

"Aye, Sir Robert, 'tis Will Bunsley, who will ne'er pull a bow or buss a lass again. Harkee, time lacks for parley, and so do thou listen while I gabble—as is my way.

"The Demoiselle d'Ibelin rests within Abdullah's tent. Some words the minstrel did contrive to make clear to her, as follows: *Item*, thou and I, my lord, must e'en stand and smite each other till one is done to death; *item*, the maid doth pray for us both, but her heart aches for thee; *item*, these Mokals be dour fighters—as witness yonder fair city taken in despite of sword and bow and wall—and they will be an-angered if thou dost quibble or draw back."

He glanced with widening eyes at

Robert's new-made mace, and with a muttered, "Saint Dunstan abet me!" went on.

"Item four, and last, Sir Robert, by no means might I prevail against thee in combat, so do thou hew me down—would thou hadst chosen another weapon—and fail not. To make sport for these our captors I will rap thy ribs a time or two and e'en deal thee a buffet on the scone."

Drawing a deep breath, he tightened his grasp on his ax.

"And so—fare thee well, my lord."

It was a changed Will Bunsley that faced Robert, the merriment vanished from his blue eyes, his jaw set stubbornly. Whether Genghis Khan or Chepe Noyon had selected the archer to oppose him, Robert did not know. Probably they had singled out the two Franks for the duel, aware that Robert was more than a match for any man of Khar. And Robert, knowing that Will Bunsley was no match for him, took a step forward.

"A true man are you," he said, smiling, for he saw his way clear before him now.

Will heaved up his ax hurriedly.

"Nay, Master Robert, get thee to the work. One of us must fall upon the ling, and—what would it avail me to strive with thee? Come, lad, a few good blows—"

"Aye," cried Robert and, striding forward, thrust aside the other's weapon and gripped his shoulder hard. "We will show them how two Englishmen can bear arms. Shoulder to shoulder, bowman—"

"What would ye, master? Ah, the good Christ aid us!"

For Robert had turned and was walking toward the nearest Mongols, swinging his mace in widening circles.

"'Tis madness for both to die. Bethink ye of the maid Ellen—"

"—who would hold me a caitiff and rec-reant, to strike you down!"

Robert sprang into the Mongols, who rose to meet him, growling and catching up their weapons. Steel ground against steel, and the great morning star swept clear a space about the knight.

Will Bunsley thrust a quivering hand across his eyes, then leaped after his comrade. His ax smashed down on the iron armor of the scattering Mongols and rose red, to flash down again until he gained Robert's side.

The warriors, who had started back in astonishment as the captives turned on them, closed in swiftly, making a circle

about them. But Robert kept moving onward, and ever the iron flail kept clear a space before him, crunching into the heads and breasts of the men who leaped at him.

The knight was making his last stand, and all the power of his long arms went into every sweep of the mace. The ring shifted and changed to a black knot that writhed and twisted and finally came to a halt near the standard, where Will went down voicelessly and disappeared under the stamping feet. A man's spine snapped like a bent branch, and some one cried out:

"Subotai! Way for the Buffalo!"

The knot about Robert fell away as the warriors drew back, glaring and snarling at their victim—as dogs might leave the side of a stag half-pulled to earth. On his pony Genghis Khan had not stirred, although the beast snorted and stamped, a spear's length from the struggle. Only the eyes of the old Mongol followed every move of the men below him.

Robert reeled and steadied himself on his feet against Subotai's rush. His breath was whistling from his lungs; both hands were slashed to the bone, and blood streamed from his forehead into his open mouth. Recognizing the warrior of the buffalo horns as the one who had sought him on the causeway, he swung up the morning star as the giant leaped forward.

Instead of plunging on, Subotai halted, digging his heels into the earth. But Robert did not strike as he had expected, thus leaving himself open to a slash of the massive curved sword of the Mongol. The other warriors stood back to watch the two champions.

This time Subotai rushed in earnest, head up and shield down, his lips snarling and his sword-arm swinging at his side. Both struck at once. The knight's mace smashed the Mongol's iron shield, and the sword swept the helm from Robert's head, sending him back, staggering.

"*Hai!*" Subotai grunted and leaped in, slashing low.

Robert could not parry the blow; instead of trying to do so he stepped forward, into the sweep of the sword. It bit into the mail on his side and thigh, snapping the steel links, and glanced down to the earth.

The spiked knob smashed down on the Mongol's chest, ripping off the iron plates and drawing blood in streams. Before Subotai could leap clear Robert dropped the

mace and gripped him about the knees. Gasping with the effort, he put forth all the strength of sinews and back muscles, raising the struggling body of the chieftain to his shoulder, shifting his grasp in a second to throat and belt of his foe, holding Subotai at the full reach of stiffened arms.

No one among the watchers moved to intercept him, and, filling his laboring lungs, he hurled Subotai to the ground. The warrior, striking on head and shoulder, rolled over and was still.

Robert stood looking down at him, swaying the while on his feet from utter weariness. He heard Chepe Noyon call out, and the deep voice of the Khan bark a command, and he tried to step toward the place where his mace had fallen, but had no longer strength to move foot or arm. He saw Chepe Noyon running toward him, felt the iron embrace of the Mongol's arms about his bruised ribs and looked up as a shout roared forth from ten thousand throats—

"Ahatou koke Mongku, ho!"

"O little son," cried the Tiger Lord, "you overthrew the Buffalo! You lifted him in your hands and tossed him down! *Hai!*—I chose well—by the white horse of Kaidu, by the eyes of all the gods—I picked a man!"

He drew back to look into Robert's scarred features.

"Did you hear the salute of the Horde? No man hath overthrown Subotai before. Nay, you know not the words of the Horde. 'Ho, brother, warrior of the Mongols, ho!'"

Genghis Khan spoke again, first to Chepe Noyon, then to a group of swordsmen who ran to the fallen Subotai and stood over him. The Buffalo had opened his eyes; now he shook his head savagely and sprang up. Instantly a score of powerful hands gripped him and held him, while the red glare faded from his eyes and he looked at Robert curiously.

"The command was given," explained Chepe Noyon to the knight, "to stay the Buffalo until his anger passed. You and he must pour water on your swords. The Khan is not minded to lose either of you."

Robert lifted his head with a wry smile.

"What mockery is this? I fought against you and slew many. Make an end!"

"Then will I tell you the judgment of the Khan. He said—

"The two Nazarenes kept faith with each other, and so will they keep faith with all men."

"If you will ride with us, you will sit in a high place at the feasts and ride the best of the horses and have a great tent. Little son, this battle was a test, even as my offer to you to surrender Bokhara was a test, and in each thing you have stood your ground and held to your faith. We have honor for such a hero, as you will see."

The knight was silent, finding this hard to believe. Yet the warriors he had wounded came to look at him closely and examine the morning star, utterly indifferent to their hurts. Subotai after a while walked over and took up the mace, whirling it about his head like a sling.

He grunted something, and Chepe Noyon interpreted:

"He says that you are to make him such a weapon and he will go against you or any other three warriors."

Now Robert laughed a little unsteadily.

"Well for me he did not have the mace a while ago. Nay, spare me another such test."

He remembered Will Bunsley and sought him out, to learn from Chepe Noyon that the Mongols had refrained from slaying the archer and had had him borne away to a tent to mend his wounds. As they talked Genghis Khan wheeled his horse and made off, a lane opening for him through the Mongol ranks. Robert saw that smoke was rising in dense plumes over the wall of Bokhara, and flames, fanned by a stiffening wind, were leaping through the smoke over the mosques.

"Tis the end of Bokhara," nodded Chepe Noyon, following his glance. "But the treasure is safe. Come, I have put aside a tent for you, and your share of the treasure awaits you."



AS THE wind-storm lashed the plain and the horse-herds of the camp turned their backs to the eddies of dust the flames raged in Bokhara, and the plumes of smoke grew into great clouds that hid the sun and swirled down on the quivering tents. Robert and Chepe Noyon wrapped their mantles over their arms, and the knight shielded his torn face as best he could from the smarting dust. Coming to the closed flap of a round woolen tent, the Mongol raised it and signed for the crusader to enter.

Still holding his mace, Robert stooped under the pole that served as a lintel, and

the next instant he was fighting for his life.

A simitar smote his chest, and he warded a blow at his head with the handle of the mace. In the semi-darkness of the heavy tent he could make out the figure of a Moslem in armor—a flying cloak and a curved sword that sought vainly for his head.

The figure leaped at him fiercely, and he brushed aside the steel blade with surprising ease and caught his antagonist fast within both arms. As he felt for the Moslem's sword-wrist his right hand closed on the warrior's throat, and he was aware of a pulse that throbbed frantically under his fingers. The helm of his adversary fell off, and Robert released his grip.

But only to tighten his arm about the dark tresses that fell about the slender shoulders of Ellen, who stared bewildered into his eyes.

"By the cross, *demoiselle*," he laughed out of a full heart, "hast still a mind to war?"

Her hands caught his cheeks and held him with rigid strength, while her warm breath beat against his throat. And he saw that she was pale as the white silk *khalat*.

"Ellen!" he cried. "Dost not know me—Robert?"

At this her eyes glowed, and she pressed her lips against his, running trembling fingers through his clotted hair, her throat quivering with sounds that made no words. Robert kissed her closed eyes and felt the weariness pass from him. Both flaps of the tent were ripped back, and Chepe Noyon strode in, hand on his sword hilt, looking greatly surprised.

"What—ha! No need to lead thee to the treasure, O Nazarene."

Ellen looked up as the light flooded in and brushed a hand across her eyes.

"My lord—I thought you slain when you came—I deemed you a Mongol, and I did not want to be—parted, again. Oh, what have I done?"

Her eyes widened, and she swayed back against his arm.

"What?" Robert smiled.

"Your face—and your armor hacked!"

Tears started to the girl's eyes.

"And see, your hand is slashed. Nay, I sought only to die, and now I have hurt you sore."

Robert stared for a moment in astonishment and then rocked with laughter.

"Little warrior, these few wounds were dealt me by the men of the Horde. Nay, Ellen, methinks you make a better maid than man-at-arms."

For many an hour they sat upon the rugs of the tent and talked, hand in hand, recounting all that had befallen them; and Chepe Noyon, leaning against the pole of the pavilion, took up a lute—for he was well content—and sang again for them the song with which he first greeted Robert. Until Ellen fell silent, her glance ever on the man who sat, chin on hand, looking through the entrance at the swirling sand and the riders that came and went.

"In another day, brave heart," he said, "Bokhara will be no more, and the road will be before us again. Chepe Noyon hath made clear to me the Mongol plans. I told him we would ride with them no-wither save to Palestine. For there is my place—and you did promise the good Father Evagrius to seek Jerusalem."

"Then will we go together, and you shall take Jerusalem," she nodded decidedly.

"Am I an emperor with a host?"

"Aye, so."

"Nay, I think not. Fair heart, our king lies at the island of Cyprus, and there we will seek him if we reach the end of the road. Yet none before us hath returned alive from Khar. These barbarians set out upon a way of peril, for they seek out Muhammad to overthrow his power and will follow him even beyond the Gates, to Bagdad or to Byzantium. They would have me strive to aid them at siege and assault upon the great cities. Will you come with me?"

"Aye, so."

She bent her head.

"If you will have me."

"Then is your promise given."

He sprang up, and Chepe Noyon rose.

"And I will hold it binding. Aye."

He looked at the Mongol, who held up his hand for silence.

From the center of the camp came the mutter of drums and the brazen note of a great gong. Chepe Noyon spoke, and the knight nodded understanding.

"The summons to saddle hath been given," Robert said, and his eyes gleamed with swift joy. "Never a queen shall have her coming heralded as yours, and never a maid shall put such a song upon the lips of the troubadours of Christendom."

AFTER-WORD

SIX months passed; and John of Brienne, thirteenth King of Jerusalem, and his court rested at Tyre, upon the seacoast, where the barons of the northern provinces had gathered in general council to discuss means of holding their ground against fresh inroads of the Saracens.

The Moslem power had grown during the long truce, and the *Croises* knew themselves to be unable to stand in battle against the armies of the caliphs and the Sultan of Damascus if these hosts should be launched toward the seacoast.

At this council were gathered the lords of Ascalon and Acre, and the Marquis of Antioch, with their peers, and the leaders of the Genoese and Venetians. And the council came to naught because the young king lacked the personality to hold men united in a cause and each baron thought for the most part of his own fief. Yet one curious and notable happening marked the assembly of the peers. A caravan entered the east gate of Tyre and passed through the wall coming from the valley of the Orontes.

The leader of this caravan was a strange figure. Garbed in the finest of Persian silks and the brightest of nankeen and cloth-of-gold, he rode a horse with trappings of silvered cloth. He was attended by a score of savage men armed with spears and bows, whose like had never been beheld in Palestine.

He bore with him a certain store of gold which he guarded carefully and was at pains to despatch by agents of the chief Venetian merchants to Egypt, there to be paid to the Moslem masters of Damietta. This gold amounted to two thousand broad pieces, and the bearer explained that it was the ransom of a knight, one Robert Longsword, so called, who had been thought slain on the border.

As to the messenger himself, when his mission was done he called for the best wine of the taverns and the most skilful of the musicians and held revelry from the Tower of the Sea to the Sign of the Broken Sword, in the French quarter. When he

drank his tongue was loosened, and it was learned that he, who had been esteemed a wealthy lord, was merely Will Bunsley, a wandering yeoman.

And when his gold and silver was spent he took service among the archers of the king and in time went from Tyre on a galley to Rhodes and thence to France. Those who had listened at first, drawn by the gold he had in his purse, began to laugh at his tale and call him a lying knave. Some, however, remembered the strange riders who had escorted him to the gate of Tyre.

But these had turned back at once, and few men believed the story of Will Bunsley, of Khar and its treasure, and an emperor of Islam who fled before an unknown conqueror.

Yet in time his narrative returned to the minds of the barons who had been at the council, and chiefly one Hugo of Montserrat, who had held his peace when mention was made of Khar.

This was when tidings came over the border of defeats suffered by the Moslems. Of Herat stormed by a new race of conquerors called the Mongols, and Balkh lost to Islam, and finally Bagdad itself fallen. So it happened that the power of the Saracens was not turned against the crusaders.

And when the fear of invasion had passed, the court of the king waxed merry. The minstrels and troubadors had a new song, made from the talk of the caravans that came over the border, and they sang of a crusader who adventured into paynimry itself and waged war upon the great cities. This they called the Romaunt of the Longsword, and many a time in hall and woman's garden they related it for the pleasuring of the people of the castle who had ever an ear for something new.

This romaunt came to be known even in the courts of Europe, and some of the minstrels sang of a maid who rode in armor beside the knight.

It is the song of a man of high honor, though no more than a youth in years, who kept faith in all things. And now this tale, from which the song came to be, has been told.



The Longstriker

By
Frank Robertson



Author of "This Bandit Business Is the Bunk," "The Regeneration of Pesokie," etc.

THE Spring of 1916 promised the longest shearing season on record, and as usual me an' Owen Davis booked our dates together. We were to start bendin' our backs in "Dad" Shipman's corral on the Rattlesnake in southern Arizona in January, an' we arranged our bookin's so's not to lose any but travelin' time till we wound up the season in George Buell's corral on the Blackfoot up in Idaho some time in July. To anybody who's ever been called upon to shear sheep it will be plumb clear that we'd give ourself some job. But we had dreams of a perfect shearin' season; not less'n a hundred an' fifty days. The reason for undertakin' a long stretch o' that kind can be explained by quotin' a letter I got from Owen just before Christmas.

It's a peculiar fact about sheep-shearers that after the shearin' season they simply seem to disappear from the face o' the earth, but the next Spring they bob up again as fresh as daisies. An' although I'd sheared side by side with Owen Davis for five Springs it was a peculiar fact that I didn't know a single thing about his life the other seven or eight months of the year. The only connectin' link between us was that he knew my address, me bein' permanently located in a pool-hall in a little town not far out o' Pocatello when I wasn't gatherin' in the mazuma by the crick in my back.

I didn't have to shear sheep, for my pool-hall was a nice payin' little business, but

every time I'd git that annual letter from Owen I'd arrange to hire a feller to take my place an' git ready to make a human question mark outa my back-bone. You see, while I'm not a longstriker I can average my hundred an' twenty-five sheep a day, an' you can see that at fourteen cents a fleece I can afford to hire a man in the pool-hall for three dollars a day.

Here, then, is the letter I got from Owen word for word except that I ain't givin' him away by namin' even the state it was sent from:

"DEAR BILL:

"How do you feel about going the whole route from the Rio Grande to the Bitter Roots this Spring? I've got to do it. I've been a careless cuss, Bill, when I wasn't shearing, and never saved any money like you done. To cut it short, old pal, I've got to raise five thousand dollars by the first of August or—I won't bother you about that. Shearing is the only way I've got to make money.

"You maybe think it can't be done, Bill, but I've got it figured out almost to a cent. By going the whole route I ought to get in a hundred and fifty days. Men are scarce this Spring so it will be a long run and we'll get fourteen cents a fleece or better. Board will be a dollar a day. I figure I can keep my expenses down to four hundred dollars by being a tight-wad.

"Now, Bill, you know my record. Take it day in and day out nobody has ever beat me shearing wherever we've worked. Of course there's faster ones than me for a day, but for the whole season I strike two hundred more days than I miss. I once sheared two hundred and thirty-five sheep in ten hours. I figure I can do two hundred every day and more some days in order to average two hundred and ten every day for a hundred and fifty days. That'll be forty-four-hundred dollars, leaving me four thousand clear of expenses.

"That leaves me a thousand dollars short yet. Now listen, Bill: Here's where I'm going to make it up. A big sheep association is offering a thousand dollar prize to the shearer who shears the most sheep during the entire season based on regular shearing corral tallies. If I can make an average of two hundred and ten a day, honestly, Bill, do you think there's a shearer can beat it? *I've simply got to have that bonus.*"

OWEN.

Considerin' the quiet, unassumin' kind of a cuss Owen is, them underscored words meant a lot. If he could average two hundred an' ten sheep every day he sheared I didn't doubt he'd win the prize, but I'm givin' it to you straight—I didn't think he could do it.

Sheep-shearin' is a funny thing. They tell me that back East, or over in Europe, if a shearer gits fifty head a day he holds a celebration. Out here the shearer that can't git a hundred is considered a bum. From a hundred to a hundred and fifty is a mighty good average, but there are a few long-strikers who can git two hundred a day or better. An' once in a while one o' these two hundred strikers will hump himself over a bunch o' bare-bellies an' go away above that figger. I've heard of men shearin' above three hundred a day—but I never met 'em, though I don't say it can't be done with the right kind of weather an' the right kind o' sheep.

Sheep-shearin' is *labor*, an' you can't make nothin' else out o' it. There you are in a slippery pen with your back bent like a rainbow, holdin' on to a squirming, loosehided piece o' animated mutton with one hand, makin' him set up an' look purty while you try to cut the wool off'n him with the other without takin' too many mutton chops out o' the live carcass. Just one day's shearin' an' the wool grease that soaks into your clothes will make 'em stand alone. Nice job!



WHATEVER it was made Owen Davis need that five thousand dollars was purty darn serious—I saw that the first time I laid eyes on him. There was a grim look in his eyes, an' a slant to his jaw that had never been there before.

We met at Dad Shipman's corral as usual, an' before we'd touched a fleece I see that things wasn't goin' to be easy for my side-kick. There were other longstrikers out for that thousand dollar bonus.

The main obstacle at our corral was a

big, husky Dane by the name of Chris Jensen, a big guy who would tip the beam at two-twenty. Before we'd been on the ground half an hour it was evident that Jensen had established himself as the camp bully.

The feller was a "Sanpeter," which among shearers expresses a lot. By way of explanation let me say that Sanpete is a place down in central Utah that was mostly settled by Danes an' Swedes. People say that for years they used to use carrots as the medium of exchange. I got nothin' against the Danes. Most of 'em are mighty good people, but when you do find a bully among 'em he's sure a bear. Anyway, the shearers that come from Sanpete are as clannish a bunch as you'll ever find, an' when they find they can ride somebody they ride 'em to death.

Jensen has a bunch with him; not all of whom are shearers. There's a good sprinklin' o' wranglers an' wool-jammers. The head wrangler is Pete Jensen, a cousin to Chris. The only reason he ain't the bully is because him an' Chris have had it out between 'em, an' found that Chris was the best man. Then there was another cousin to 'em, a guy named Larsen, who done the grindin' for the corral.

Our mix-up with the Sanpeters occurs at once.

Owen goes up to Dad Shipman an' says—"Any objection to us takin' the two pens nearest the end o' the chutes?"

"None at all," Dad says. "Help yourselves."

We'd no more than climbed into the pens to git ready when Pete Jensen, the head wrangler, comes a-snortin' up.

"Hey, you guys," he yells, "them pens is pre-empted by Chris Jensen an' his side partner. Git outa there."

It was bluff pure an' simple because Dad Shipman had just told us we could have 'em. I looked to Owen to assert himself for I knew he come of a fightin' breed, an' he had a hundred an' ninety pounds o' bone an' muscle to back up his assertions. But he just stood there, half-hesitatin' until big Chris comes to back up his claim in person.

"Git outa there," big Chris roars.

Owen steps back an' sizes him up. His fists clinch an' a sort of a film seems to come over his eyes like I've seen before when he got good an' mad. I look for him to land one on the Dane's jaw. Jensen scowls an'

comes on with them big fists a-swingin'. The fight didn't come off. Owen simply jumps over the fence an' starts away.

"Take 'em," he says. "It don't make no difference. There's a pen for every shearer, I reckon."

A sheep couldn't have acted more humble. It was as near to runnin' from a fight as a man could come. Worst of it was every shearer, wrangler, an' wool-jammer was there to see Owen back water.

"I don't want to see you birds in this end o' the shed again," Chris Jensen fires after us.

Me? What could I do? When I fatten up in the Winter time I don't weigh a hundred an' fifty, an' I'm no fighter, nohow. I simply tagged along after my pardner. We passed Dad Shipman, an' the old man looks at Owen kinda funny.

"You fellers can take the pens in the other end of the shed," he says coldly.

"Why didn't you call that bird, Jensen?" I asks Owen as quick as we're alone.

The big feller twists up his face like he's in pain, an' for a minute that film seems to drift over his eyes.

"I dassn't, Bill," he says. "I got to win that prize an' every day counts. If me an' Jensen mixes it's just about a cinch that both of us will quit workin' for a spell."

I let it go, for it sounded reasonable in a way, but all the same I knew there was somethin' else back of it, an' I hated to think that my pal was a plain coward. I didn't.

That was the beginnin' of a persecution that got worse every day. That Sanpete crowd never let up on us a minute after that, an' furthermore they cut down Owen's tally every day. Losin' that end pen cost him at least ten fleeces every day. To some people a sheep is a sheep, but there's just as much difference in their dispositions as there is in people, an' it all crops up in shearin' time.

Let me explain. The herd is corralled in a big pen in the back, an' then filtered through smaller corrals an' chutes till they git to the chute where the wranglers fill the shearer's little pens in the shed. There's no front to the shearers' pens, but as it's always a sheep's inclination to go back that don't bother. When the fleece is off a sheep the shearer just gives it a kick out into the middle o' the shed where the fleece wranglers tie it up, an' then the fleeces are

collected by the wool-jammers an' sixty or seventy of 'em are tramped into a wool sack.

When a shearer has his pen all sheared the wranglers open the gate in the back, throw it across the first chute for a gate, an' haze the sheared ones into a second chute where the owner brands 'em down at the end of it an' they pass out into another big herd corral. But the point I'm bringin' out is that every sheep had to pass by Chris Jensen's pen, an' whenever Pete saw a barebelly, meanin' a sheep that's had the wool all scratched off its belly an' sides on the brush, an' so don't have more than half the surface to shear, he'd pick it up an' throw it in to Chris. Pen after pen would be filled an' by the time they got down to us there wouldn't be nothin' left but the wrinkled sheep or the stubborn ones that had fought past every dodge gate to the last.

It is a cinch that any old biddy who can fight her way past twenty-five or thirty dodge gates is goin' to object plumb strenuous against bein' disrobed by a stingin', singin' Stewart shearin'-machine. It works out that way. You can set a docile sheep up on end an' it stays there doin' nothin' no worse than lookin' reproachful, but you take a hundred pounds o' mutton that's bent to git away with the wool on an' they can wear a man to a frazzle. An' as I say Pete Jensen always contrived to give Owen most of the "wrinklies," that kind with the rows o' dew-laps flappin' so that you have to hold your critter with your knees while you use one hand to stretch out the wrinkles an' shear with the other. That's why I say that Pete Jensen easy knocked Owen out of at least ten sheep a day.

"I'll say this for Chris Jensen—he could sure shear. He was not a steady plugger like Owen. He'd go in an' shear like a wild man for a couple o' hours an' then stretch out on the wool sacks to rest for an hour, but while he was at it I never saw a man faster.

It was a race between Owen an' the big Dane from the start. Of course we knew there would be a few shearers at other corrals after that prize money, but I couldn't see how anybody could beat the best one of them two. Owen made a mistake at the start. A man has to ease himself into a graft of that kind gradual or his back goes back on him. The first day

he knocked out a hundred and eighty-eight. The next day he only got one seventy-five, an' in a big effort to make it back the next day he struck his two hundred—an' had to lay off all the next day. When he started in again he started in right—a hundred an' a quarter the first day an' increased it twenty-five each day till he hit his stride an' was toughened into it. But by that time Chris Jensen had a hundred an' fifty fleeces to the good.

Then, just when it looked like Owen was goin' to begin to gain, the Sanpeters handed us another jolt that come near bein' a knock-out. For some days we noticed that our combs an' cutters came back from the grinder in poor condition. We both knew it was hard to keep the cutters from bein' burned on the emery wheel, but Larsen was drawin' fifteen dollars a day an' was supposed to be an expert.

At first we only asked the Dane to be more careful but he only grinned, an' the grindin' got worse. You simply have to have sharp tools to cut through a lot o' dirty, gummy wool. When you start a long sweep around a sheep's ribs an' your machine sings through with a sweet little purr you feel like humpin' yourself. But when it goes a few inches an' clogs, an' a few more an' clogs, an' the pullin' makes your animal begin to fight an' kick—well, you can imagine it.

Owen goes to Larsen once more.

"Me an' Bill will grind our own tools after this," he says.

It would mean the loss of half an hour each day an' he knew it.

"Yuh can't use this wheel, yuh big stiff," says Larsen.

I looked for Owen to land on him, but the big feller just walked away with a hopeless droop to his shoulders.

We went to Dad Shipman about it, an' I'll tell the world we had to swallow a whole lot o' pride to do it, but even that didn't do no good. Corral bosses ain't in the habit o' interferin' with shearers' quarrels.

"If yuh don't like the kind o' grindin' yuh git yuh can quit," he says bluntly.

We went back to work with our dull tools an' said nothin'. At first mine were a bit better than Owen's till the Sanpeters learned I was exchangin' with Owen. Then there was no difference. Except for that third day's shearin' Owen never got his two hundred while big Chris went over the line

every day. The persecution from the Sanpeters never ceased. When they knew Owen wouldn't fight they carried it on in the cook-shack an' the bunk tents. It got so we had to slink around like a pair o' coyotes. Our only hope was that our ways would soon part. The run at Dad Shipman's only lasted three weeks, an' we hoped our trails an' the Sanpeters wouldn't cross again.

When we got through big Chris had a mighty fat lead, but Owen was tickled as a boy with a new saddle when he found we was done with the Sanpeters for a while. They went to a corral near St. George in southern Utah, an' we headed into southern Nevada for a long run of desert sheep that were mostly bare-bellies.

"If you'd took time to licked Chris Jensen at the start you'd have been ahead of him now," I said.

"What if he has got a lead of three hundred head. It's only a day an' a half's shearin'. It's better this way. Even if I'd licked Chris I'd have likely got laid out by Pete Jensen an' Larsen an' the others. All I'm askin' for is that we ain't booked at any other corral where they shear," Owen says.

I shut up. It was somethin' of a slam on me, but then I knew I stood no chance against any of them big Danes.



WE WERE at that corral till nearly the first o' May, an' how we did shear! It was a wonderful Spring; scarcely any storm, an' no dew on the wool to hold us back an hour or two in the mornin' as sometimes happened farther north. Owen was scratchin' 'em out at an average o' two-twenty-five a day, which is some shearin' if you ask me. Three different days he went over his own record without hurtin' himself. Once he hit two-fifty-nine, an' was too dog tired to git the one more that would make an even number.

Our next job was in Utah, an' Owen was in a state o' nerves till he found the Sanpete bunch wasn't there. But they were at another corral not ten miles away, an' we were doomed to see a lot more of 'em.

At our corral was another longstriker, a man named Riggins, a clean-cut shearer who was runnin' strong for that prize money. The first day we checked up an' Owen had a lead over Riggins of just four sheep. Riggins got a pen on the other side of Owen

from me an' those two watched each other like hawks. That kind o' competition was good for 'em both. Some days Owen would lead; some days Riggins, dependin' on which got the best sheep, an' the wranglers was square.

Then, one Sunday, the Sanpeters came over to our corral in a body. A bunch of us was takin' a sun-bath on top of a stack o' filled wool sacks piled fifteen high when they drove up. Big Chris Jensen climbed outa the wagon an' climbs up the rick o' sacks till he was just below us.

"Well, yuh big boob," he says to Owen, "you still tryin' to shear sheep?"

"I'm shearin' a few I reckon," Owen says slowly.

"I've heard that you've been bribin' wranglers over in Nevada to load your pen with bare-bellies," Jensen says. "What was the best you done over there?"

Owen went pale an' there was a tremble in his voice that the Sanpeters thought meant that he was afraid. I didn't think so, but events proved they was right.

"I never bribed no wranglers. I took what was given to me, an' one day I got two hundred an' fifty-nine," he says.

Big Chris turned red.

"You're a liar," he bellered. "Yuh never seen the day you could shear as many sheep as I can, an' the best I ever got was two-forty-eight. An' you're a liar when yuh say yuh never bribed no wranglers. At Dad Shipman's you tried to bribe Larsen here to gyp my combs an' cutters. He says yuh did."

That was what you'd have to call the limit—accusin' Owen of the very things he'd done himself. An' there was Larsen grinning like a Chessy cat. The only thing to do about it was to fight—an' that Owen wouldn't do.

"You're mistaken, Jensen," was all he said.

"Don't tell me I'm mistaken," Jensen howled, an' he swarms up the wool sacks an' grabs Owen by the leg.

The next second Owen goes a bumpin' down the end o' that pile o' wool sacks on his head.

An' he took it.

Riggins walked away without a word, but he was lookin' queer. The way he sized it up Owen was crooked or he wouldn't have took what he did take. Thereafter he never spoke to either of us. I think that

hurt Owen worse than the disgrace of bein' dragged by the heels by Chris Jensen.

When we finished up in that corral Owen had just seven more sheep for the season than Riggins. On the fifth of June we pulled into George Buell's corral on the Blackfoot for the final six weeks run. Riggins had come that far with us because he was booked to shear at Browne's corral eighteen miles farther on. We had learned at Soda Springs that Browne had ten or twelve thousand less sheep to shear than Buell had, an' that meant good-by to Riggins' chances unless he could change his bookin' to Buell's. He learned mighty quick that there was no chance.

An' then we seen that the whole bunch o' Sanpeters was on deck at Buell's.

"Tell you what I'll do, Riggins," Owen speaks up quick. "I'll change jobs with you."

Riggins looks up suspicious. I can see he's thinkin' o' that charge o' crookedness that Jensen had made an' which Owen had took. As he figgered it Owen was makin' the offer so he could pull somethin' crooked up at Browne's. But with a three day shorter run up there Riggins knew his own chances were gone.

"I'll take you on if I lose," he said, an' the change was made.

Of course I had to change bookin's with Riggins' pardner, an we went up the country another eighteen miles. An' them Sanpeters jeered as long as we could hear 'em.

It sure looked like a fool thing to do. Of course we didn't know how many sheep Chris had sheared, but it was a cinch that Riggins' would git any way five hundred down at Buell's after we were all through.

We hammered away for six weeks on sheep that were mostly close-wools an' hard to shear, an' we knew that Buell had landed at least one big job o' loose-wools when he got a hundred thousand belongin' to the Idaho Sheep Company. Yet all the time Owen was holdin' his average up to the two hundred an' ten he'd set himself at the start.

He was livin' close, spendin' so little money at the commissary that he got a reputation as a tight-wad as well as a coward an' a crook, for the corral gossip of every place we'd worked had folloed us, but it looked like he was goin' to pull down the four thousand dollars he'd set himself to make by shearin'. It sure looked like

he'd have to go without that thousand dollar bonus, though, for when we settled up at Browne's we learned that Buell still had three day's shearin'.

"Well, good-by, bonus," I said while we was packin' our stuff after supper. "But you done mighty well as it was."

"If I don't win that bonus I'd as well not have made a dollar," Owen says grimly, "but I ain't give up makin' that prize yet."

Well, we packed our junk, an' hired a wagon to drive us down to Buell's corral that night, an' when the cook commenced hammerin' his breakfast call on the triangle we was ready to file in. We went around the end of a long table an' filed in on a bench, an' it so happened that Owen was next to Riggins.

"How you been comin'?" Owen asks Riggins.

Riggins was sure packin' a grouch.

"Don't talk to me, — yuh," he snarls.

"What's the matter?" Owen persists.

"You got the best o' the trade didn't you with three more days to go. You sure ought to git a lead on me in that time. How many you got?"

"I got just four thousand two hundred an' forty-one outa thirty-five an' a half day's shearin'," Riggins grunts.

It wasn't much better than I'd done myself.

"Why, I've got seventy-four twenty-eight in that time," Owen says.

He done a bit o' quick figgerin'.

"Why that puts me twenty-one hundred an' ninety-four fleeces ahead o' you."

"It does, an' you knew — well it would when yuh wanted to change bookin's with me," Riggins snapped.

Just then the Sanpeters come filin' in to breakfast, an' Riggins gives 'em a glance plumb full o' pizen hate. It was plain to tell, then, what had happened. That Sanpeter bunch had give Riggins exactly the same kind of a deal they'd give Owen at Dad Shipman's. There was more excuse for Riggins takin' it because he wasn't a big man.

Just then big Chris Jensen's eyes lighted on us an' the big yaller-haired gorilla pulled his face into a scowl an' sings out—

"What you wool-pickers mean comin' in here eatin' with the men?"

Wool-pickers are the guys who scour the ranges pickin' the wool off the sheep that

die on the range. Lower'n that it's hard fer a man to fall.

Big Chris is comin' down toward us on the opposite side of the table an' he's backed up by his cousin Pete, an' Larsen the grinder.

"I'll give you a hundred dollars for the use of your pen the rest o' the run," Owen whispers to Riggins.

It was more than Riggins could make a-shearin', an' he was definitely out of the prize contest.

"I'll take it," he says.

Big Chris stops directly opposite us, an' leans across the table till his ugly mug is right over our plates.

"How many sheep you claim to a-sheared?" he snorts.

Owen gives him the total figgers, an' adds that they're backed up by the papers of the boss of every corral where we've worked.

Jensen went red, an' somebody at the other end o' the table sings out—

"He got yuh skinned just ninety-eight head, Chris."

"What of it?" roars big Chris. "I've got three days to shear, an' he's through."

"I'm still shearin'," Owen says mildly. "I just bought Riggins' pen for the rest o' the season."

Big Chris lets out a howl, an' for a minute he acts like he's goin' to come square over the table.

"Look here, you crook," he yells, "yuh don't shear in this corral—not a sheep."

"The only man can stop me is George Buell, an' I reckon he won't care if Riggins is willin' to give up his job to me," Owen says, an' for the first time in months there's a kind of ring in his voice, but at that it don't ring just true to me.

"What about it, Buell?" Jensen demands.

"He can shear," Buell says. "All I'm interested in is gittin' through. An' as far as that prize money you fellers is after is concerned it's to encourage every man that's after it to hump himself for the whole season. Davis has got a right to buy a job if he wants to."

"There's this much about it, Jensen," Owen speaks up quietly. "If you start a fight at this stage of the game I'll guarantee that whether you lick me or not you won't be able to shear for three days, an' I'll be ahead of you if I don't win that bonus."

Big Chris rocked back an' forth on his feet tryin' to make up his mind. He never

was a fast thinker, but it finally leaked into his mind that there was somethin' in it. Furthermore, him an' the whole Sanpete bunch had bet a lot o' money that he'd pull down the prize. An' Owen, as he stood there smilin' across the table wasn't easy-lookin' to tackle. He was a different looker to the man who'd been drug off the wool sacks by his heels. Then big Pete, who was really the brains o' the bunch, nudged Chris an' he started to set down.

Owen speaks again:

"Buyin' Riggins' job has set me back some, an' I need the money. I'll bet you five hundred dollars I shear more sheep for the season's run than you do."

Again Peter give Chris a nudge an' the bet was made. In one way it looked like a good bet for Owen considerin' that lead of ninety-eight he had to start with. But when you considered that sullen lookin' bunch o' Sanpeters that lead looked less than nothin'. That was the fact of it, Owen had the whole bunch of 'em to beat.



I FIGGERED that what Owen got at Dad Shipman's wouldn't be more'n to what he'd git here, an' I figgered correct. The very first bunch Owen got in his pen were culls, an' big Chris's were almost exclusively bare-bellies. The first batch o' cutters sent to Larsen to grind come back to Owen in worse shape than when he sent 'em.

But for once Owen was prepared. He simply laid the dull ones aside an' produced a fresh package. He'd simply bought up all the combs an' cutters at the other corral when Brown finished up, and had paid the grinder up there to put 'em in razor shape. He was heeled for tools for the three days.

It started out to be a real race. Both of 'em were tough as whale-bone, an Chris had quit layin' on the wool sacks. The way those two big boys humped over an' sheared was a sight to watch. It seemed that they would no more than ketch a biddy by the leg than they were turnin' her loose with the wool off. It looked like the first day would tell the story; whether Jensen, with the aid of his crooked wranglers could cut down Owen's lead in the three days left to shear.

For all his hurry Owen was careful. He seldom cut a sheep, while Jensen was turnin' 'em loose drippin' blood. No serious cuts you understand, but just patches

o' hide ripped off where he'd got a mite too deep. Finally the owner made a complaint an' George Buell told the big Sanpete straight out he had to do better or quit. He could take no chances on gittin' fired at that stage o' the game, an' it slowed him up.

The finish o' the first day showed Owen with a tally of two hundred an' twelve an' Jensen with one-ninety-five. That put it squarely up to the Sanpeters to pull something crooked if they beat Owen. As a rule the shearers an' the wranglers were left strictly alone, but there were limits they dassn't go over. They dassn't keep a shearer waitin' for sheep, nor a shearer dassn't git too rough on his sheep.

The next day saw the Sanpete wranglers under Pete Jensen pullin' every single thing they could pull without gittin' themselves fired, an' still big Chris couldn't lessen that gap much between 'em. I never saw Owen shear so before. He swung that old Stewart back an' forth as steady an' as reg'lar as a pendulum on a clock. Sweat rolled off him in streams. He had put on a new undershirt to shear in that morning, an' by nine o'clock it was so stiff with sweat an' grease that it cracked like broken pasteboard with every move.

"If he holds the pace," said Riggins, who had stayed to see the finish, "he'll have two-twenty-five by night, an' Jensen can't beat that even with the bare-bellies he's a drawin'."

At noon big Chris had only gained two fleeces. Before they went back to work I saw the Sanpeters talkin' together an' I knew somethin' was sure to happen. Everybody was watchin' the shearers an' the wranglers, for Pete wasn't even makin' a pretense to be fair. George Buell was watchin' like a hawk to see that Owen's pen was kept full o' somethin' with wool on, but everybody'd neglected the other chute where the clipped ones went out. Even Fox, the owner, and his men were watchin' the shearin' until a small bunch pen was filled up.

Finally Fox an' his camp-mover strolled over to the bunch pen with their brandin' sticks an' pots o' paint to daub a green "F" on the sheared sheep. An' a minute later Fox let out a yell, an' come carryin' a fine young ewe with one hind leg all but cut off. The whole flank had been ripped open an' the cut went on around the hip joint as

neat as a butcher would have done it, as near as you could tell for the blood.

In a minute a dozen of us had collected around Buell an' the sheepman. A head above the rest was Pete Jensen. The sheepman jerks out his knife an' cuts the ewe's throat to save it further sufferin'.

"Either you fire the man that done that, or I'll pull every sheep outa this corral," Fox declares grimly.

The sheepman was justified. You have to watch shearers every minute or when they git to longstrikin' they'll just about take the hide off a sheep as well as the wool in their hurry to make a big tally. If examples wasn't made of some of 'em it would be fierce. Fox couldn't ignore a thing like that, an' Buell couldn't afford to have his last job walk out on him.

"Who done that?" Buell asks Pete Jensen.

The boss wrangler was the one man in a position to know.

"That one come from Davis's pen," he said without a blink.

"Come over here, Davis," Buell yells, an' Owen turns loose a sheep half-sheared an' comes over.

"You're fired, Davis, I can't stand for work like this," Buell says, pointin' at the dead ewe.

I never see such a look come over a man's face as come over Owen's then. He'd disconnected his Stewart machine from the power rod, an' he drew it back like he meant to ram somebody with it. Let me tell you that one o' those machines with the long, steel-toothed combs could just about make mince-meat of any man's face.

"The man that says I done that is a liar," Owen says just above a whisper, an' with a glare at Pete Jensen that made the big Sanpeter back up among his friends who had clustered around.

An' then here comes big Chris shoulderin' his way through the crowd, an' he has his Stewart machine in his hand. I shudders when I think of what might happen if them two big boys should mix things with them machines in their hands. An' it looks at last like Owen had played his last card an' was ready to fight.

"I say you done it—I counted it out o' your pen," Pete Jensen says, but he backs up between Chris an' Larsen, an' there's three other Sanpeters right behind.

Again Owen draws back his arm. There's

sure a murderous look on his face, but he seems tryin' to keep control of himself. Suddenly he brings his arm ahead an' throws that Stewart machine as far as it'll sail. An' then his face contorts like a mad-man's.

Before big Chris knew what was happenin' Owen was on him. The first blow sent the big Dane sprawlin' for twenty feet. As Owen follered him up Larsen swung on him, an' the wallop took Owen fair on the side o' the head. It knocked him sideways for a dozen feet, but it never stopped him. Then Pete Jensen, a bigger man than Owen, tackled him, but with a toss like a wild bull Owen threw him off.

The delay give big Chris time to git on his feet, an' as they come together he swung that murderous lookin' Stewart machine. The blade caught Owen on the shoulder an' traveled down his arm to the elbow. Just a second you could see the red furrows where those comb teeth tore into the flesh an' then blood squelched through in streams like there was a force pump behind it.

An' then Owen had seized Jensen's wrist, an' his other hand traveled up, not more than a foot, it seemed; until it struck big Chris under the jaw. The big Dane went off the ground a foot, an' his head popped back till it seemed like human bone couldn't stand it without breakin'.

With two such giants fightin' like madmen the battle couldn't last long. Almost at once Owen twisted the machine out of Chris's hand, an' then he got over another mighty punch to the jaw an' the big Dane slumped like a sack o' straw. He was whipped, but Owen wasn't done. The film was in his eyes again, an' if he didn't intend to kill him, he did intend to stop him from shearin' sheep.

I'd heard o' men wipin' up the earth with a man, but there I actually saw it. Owen picked up the Sanpeter an' crashed him against the board fence on one side o' the chute, an' three whole panels went down in the crash. He throwed him, jerked him, shook him, mauled him, and finally fastened on his throat with the blood-thirsty ferocity of a bull-dog. The Sanpeters knew he was killing big Chris, but though they had fully intended to gang up on Owen if the going got rough for Chris, they just stood back in a sort of dumb terror with their mouths open. There was something paralyzing about such ferocity.

Any of the rest of us would have interfered if we had known how, but he didn't seem to hear what we said, and the only way to get him loose was to knock him cold or kill him, and some way everybody waited for the other fellow and nobody went for a club. And then a wool-buyer by the name of Reynolds suddenly shouldered his way through the crowd.

"Owen!" he yelled. "Owen, have you forgotten Mamie York—Mamie York."

For a second it seemed that the words, whatever they might mean, had failed to sink into Owen's brain; then his fingers slowly began to relax, and Chris Jensen's blackened face began to get some color as his respiratory organs again began to function. The insane look on Owen's face began to pass away like fog lifting slowly from a hill-top. He got to his feet and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand. Then he reached out sort of impulsively and shook hands with Reynolds, and started toward our tent.

"One minute," Buell says. "Look at the ragged edges of this cut where I've wiped the blood away. It never was done with no machine. If I ain't a liar it was done with a pair of old-fashioned blade shears."

We all saw Pete Jensen turn pale, an' there was a rush toward the chute where the sheared sheep were turned loose. Shoved down between a couple of boards was a pair o' blade shears with the blood on 'em still sticky. It was all plain enough. After Owen's pen of woolies were turned out Pete had caught one and maimed it so that Owen would get the blame.

Buell made a sign toward his office an' the Sanpete bunch trailed over to git their time. After what had happened they was gittin' off easy, and they didn't even chirp when Buell announced that they'd lost their bet to Owen.

There was nothin' to keep Owen from goin' in an' shearin' if he felt like it, an'

after I'd bandaged that bleeding arm of his he went in an' knocked out seventy head that afternoon. It was lucky that he did, for a few weeks later we learned that he had won that prize by havin' just fifteen more fleeces than the next best shearer of the season, a fellow by the name of Thompson whom we'd only seen once or twice. And the next mornin' that arm was swelled to twice its natural size, an' he couldn't raise it. What he suffered with it that afternoon nobody knows.

Naturally everybody was crazy to know what Reynolds had meant by his reference to Mamie York. To do the wool-buyer credit he wouldn't say a word until Owen give him permission. We learned at the same time that Reynolds was the man who was keeping an eye on the shearin' contest because he was a friend of the sheepman who was puttin' up the prize money, an' because his business took him to every corral in the country.

"Mamie York," says Reynolds, "is the widow of a man who Owen Davis killed with his two hands after York had pulled a gun on him. The fellow had it coming to him and Owen was acquitted on the grounds of self-defense. I happened to be at the trial and I remembered today how all broke up Owen was every time he'd look at the widow an' her three kids. I had a hunch."

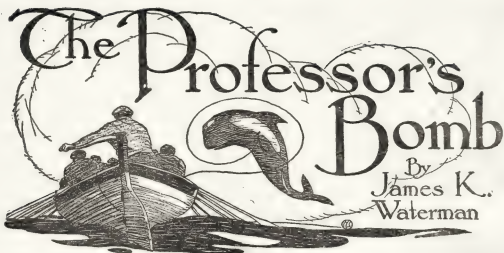
But it was a long time later before I knew why Owen needed that five thousand dollars so bad. I got the explanation in a letter which Owen wrote me sayin' he was done shearin' for life.

"There's too many chances to quarrel, and I go plumb crazy. The jury said I had a right to kill York, but I know a — sight better. If it hadn't been for that fool temper of mine I could have licked him and let it go at that. The man had a family left without a provider, and worse than that they owed five thousand dollars on their home that they had to pay by the first of August or lose, and the widow couldn't make it. Wasn't it up to me, I ask you that?"



The Professor's Bomb

By
James K.
Waterman



Author of "The Man in the Water" and "The Master's Touch."

"I WANT you to give partic'lar attention to this here bomb-lance I'm a-goin' to show ye, Mr. Deedham," counseled Captain Mallett, "for to my notion it's a invention that'll rev'lutionize the whole business o' whalin'. But where in tarnation is that steward? I sent him for it a hour ago 'pears like. That smoke is gettin' slower an' slower every v'yage."

He rose from his deck chair and peered down through the open skylight into the after-cabin.

"Hey you, Smuts!" he growled. "Hurry up with that there bomb. It's in the forrad lower drawer onder my bunk where I told ye it was. Wrapped in brown paper."

"Yes sah, yes sah!" floated up the throaty, musical voice of the black steward. "I done discaberate it, sah. Coming, sah."

The captain resumed his seat and in another moment Smuts appeared on the poop his coal-black face shining, like polished ebony, with perspiration for it was a hot afternoon, the whaling bark *Sankaty* being, by the noon's observation, about three degrees south of the line in the Atlantic. Smuts handed the elongated parcel gingerly to the captain and went about his business.

Captain Mallett paused in the act of unwrapping the bomb to warn the man at the wheel to keep the sails full, for the helmsman in his eagerness to see this novelty had allowed the ship to come up into the wind. He spun the wheel and for the time being became perfectly cross-eyed in endeavoring

to keep one eye on the shivering leach of the main t'gallant-s'l and the other on this wonderful engine of destruction which the captain now exposed in the shape of a cast-iron tube, eighteen inches long, as thick as a man's thumb, and terminating in a triangular point of needle sharpness.

After examining it almost lovingly for a little while the captain passed it to Mr. Deedham, the mate, who was sitting on the edge of the skylight where he could catch the draught from the spanker and at the same time flash an occasional eye on the main deck where the watch had the spun-yarn machine going in the waist, manufacturing season-stuff from pieces of old hemp rigging, under the supervision of the second mate.

"Set-fire! I don't see nothin' extraordinary about this bomb," decided the mate after viewing it from all angles critically. "It's as like them others we been using as two peas."

Captain Mallett relighted the inevitable cigar and chuckled:

"To be sure it does *look* like t' others, I'll admit, but right there all resemblance ends, Mr. Deedham. You see, the ord'nary bomb is filled with six ounces of common black powder, an' if it don't bust in just the right place it don't stop the whale none. He don't mind it no more'n a charge o' duck-shot. But nothin' like that'll happen with *this* here bomb for the minute it enters the whale, no matter what portion o' him, he becomes par'lyzed an' lays on the water

as stiff as the main-mast, an' in a few minutes more he keels over fin out—dead.”

“Set-fire! Ye don’t say!” exclaimed Mr. Deedham his eyes flaring with the light of interest. “What kinder powder d’yer s’pose is inside the bomb to make it perform them miracles?”

“It ain’t powder at all,” explained the captain, surveying the lethal instrument proudly. “It’s full o’ chem’cals er—a mixture o’ salts o’ strychnine an’ bi-oxide o’ oxalic sunthin’, an’ another ingrediunt which o’ course the inventor wouldn’t tell an’ you can’t blame him. But it’s some invention, I tell ye, Mr. Deedham, an’ it’s come in the right time too, for whale-ile is bound to rise when them min’ral ile wells run dry.”

“When they do,” the mate modified. “Who’s the inventor of this wonder, I’d like to know? Couldn’t been a whaleman; they ain’t extra larned about chem’cals I should say.”

“Perfesser Enderby’s his name. I never seen him before one mornin’ we was all a-settin’ in the back of Kelley’s shop, the place ye know where us cap’ns hang out in New Bedford, when in walks a tall, fun’ral-lookin’ critter an’ bows to all hands. He introduces hisself as a gran’son of old Dick Enderby what was cap’n o’ a New London whaler in the early forties. He explains that, in consequence he’s turrible interested in whales an’ has resigned his job as perfesser o’ chem’stry in the Mass’chusetts In’stoot o’ Tecology to invent these here bombs which he has six o’ ’em wrapped up in a newspaper under his arm.

“The perfesser soon has us cap’ns interested for he was one o’ the most convincin’ talkers I ever see an’ he showed us as plain as day just how them there bombs would fix a fractious whale. But sho, I didn’t go altogether by that jaw-tackle o’ his for, if I do say it myself I’m a mighty good judge o’ human nater, Mr. Deedham. An’ so I sizes this perfesser up fore an’ aft an’ ath-wartships-like an’ I could tell he was gen’wine all right.

“He didn’t offer to sell the bombs—just wanted us to take ’em an’ try ’em on a whale an’ write him the result. But as we could see plain ’nuff he’d spent all his money exper’mentin’ an’ such-like, an’ takin’ into consideration that if them bombs would do what he said, they meant from one to eight thousan’ dollars ev’ry shot, us six skippers

each took one an’ give him ten dollars apiece for ’em. Then he gives us his address—I got it below somewhere—asks us all to be sure an’ write an’ goes out mighty perlite an’ thankful.”

“Set-fire! Ten dollars!”

The mate regarded the bomb dubiously.

“Wal, cap’n, if this here bomb is such a tremenjus weapon as ye say how is it ye ain’t tried it out? You had a chance when we got inter that pod o’ whales on the Western grounds—off the Azores—an’ got three o’ ’em. I should ’a’ thought then was the time to shoot them chem’cals.”

Captain Mallett smiled tolerantly.

“Mebbe so, but it’s like this, Mr. Deedham. While I’m dead sure in my own mind that them bombs will do all the perfesser claims still, ye see, I got the owners to consider. For if there is sech a possible thing that this here bomb ain’t nothin’ extra-ord’nary an’ I should use it on a sperm whale an’ he got clean away in consequence—well, ye can see how ’tis yourself. I’m a-waitin’ to try it out on a fin-back or a sulphur-bottom, or I might use it in a ’mergency-like. We’ll see.”

He lighted another cigar, regarded his mate thoughtfully for a long moment, and then remarked—

“Considerin’ all the circumstances, Mr. Deedham, what’s your opinion of this remark’ble invention?”

Mr. Deedham stopped fumbling with his iron-gray side-whiskers, cast a look aloft to the lookouts at the mastheads and turned a lugubrious countenance to the captain.

“Set-fire, cap’n! Bein’ as you’ve asked my opinion I’ll tell ye right out I don’t think that there bomb is wuth a —!”

“No? What’s wrong with it?” flashed back the captain, his broad, red face flaring up like a sunset. “Tell me, sir, what’s wrong with it?”

He bounced up angrily from his chair and snatched the bomb from the mate’s hand.

“What’s wrong with it?” he demanded again.

“Set-fire, I dunno!” returned the mate, also rising and biting off a huge chew of tobacco. “We’ll probably find *that* out when we try it. I ain’t got no faith in *them* inventor — cranks no-way, nor *chem’cals* neither unless mebbe it’s Epsom salts.”

Captain Mallett snorted in disgust.

“Hey, Smuts!” he barked to the steward who happened to be passing, “take this

bomb to the paint-locker an' give it a dab o' red lead so if sometime it should happen to get mixed up with any of the others we can tell it at a glance. And then put it back where ye got it from."

Handing Smuts the bomb, he turned to the mate.

"If all whalemen was as non-progressive as ye be, Mr. Deedham," he observed bitingly, "we'd still be goin' after whales with bows an' arrers like them Gay Head Injuns used to. That there bomb ain't wuth a —, eh? I'll show ye. Why, sir, I'd stake my entire v'yage on the bomb an' my rep'tation as a judge o' human nater on Professor Enderby. I'm reely s'prized at ye, Mr. Deedham, ye seem to be as imperv'ous to new ideas as a salt codfish.

"Jest to prove to ye that my judgment is as sound as ever I'm a-goin to throw that there bomb into the fust thing in the shape o' a whale that comes along an' Mr. Deedham you're a-goin' to see sunthin' when that volcaner strikes. Yessur, you'll see sunthin' surprizin' or my name ain't Elijah J. Mallett."



NEWS of this marvellous explosive projectile soon vibrated throughout the ship. And the fact that the captain had sworn to use it at the first opportunity was a source of much gratification to all hands for they had immediately become as eager as a hunter with a new gun to see this wonder-working missile in action.

Day after day while the old *Sankaty* was cruising slowly down to St. Helena, the eyes of the lookouts probed unceasingly the blinding glare of waters in search of a spout. Then of a sudden, one Monday morning, when they were in Lon. 26—47 W. Lat., 7—13 S., well to the westward of Ascension, the tenacious whalemen got their chance.

"I do b'lieve that there bull has been asleep on the bottom o' the ocean for at least two weeks," observed Captain Mallett as the boats were lowering. "His head an' jaw is just plumb covered with barnacles an' grass. He's a ol'-timer an'll likely prove fractious. Set your sails an' work up to wind'ard o' him an' then run down. Take yer time an' be keeful. Ye got all day an' whatever ye do don't galley* him."

After thus counseling his officers Captain Mallett took the Enderby bomb, now

marked with a broad band of red paint, from the hand of Smuts, and dropping into his boat joined in the pursuit of this freakish-looking whale.



IF, AS the captain surmized, the giant bull had been having a prolonged nap prior to his appearance, he had, assuredly awakened very much refreshed for no sooner did he feel the prick of the four irons as the captain and mate fastened to him than he immediately had business on the other side of the globe.

Hollowing his back and swinging his enormous junk with a muffled roar that shook the water, he tore dead to windward, cleaving the seas with the speed of a torpedo-boat, the boats swooping behind him in two streaks of boiling foam, the captain and mate, their legs straddled in the stern-sheets, gripping the long steering-oars, their eyes snapping in this Nantucket sleigh-ride with an excitement that was ever new.

The second and third mates' boats which had come up to assist were left behind as if they were at anchor, while all the crews of the fast boats could do was to sit facing forward, hands on the bar-taut line and wait patiently until this ocean-greyhound slackened speed and gave them a chance to haul up on him.

In something like a half-hour the t'galants'ls of the *Sankaty* were just visible glinting against the mottled blue sky when, of a sudden, the bull veered his course to starboard nearly three points. This change allowed the men to haul in a few fathoms of line but as the whale had not slackened speed as soon as the slack of the lines was in they were powerless to haul the boats any closer.

They were, however, within bombing distance, and the captain and mate got out the bomb-guns, and began firing. Twenty-three bombs were fired but for some reason, the distance being too great or the whale having an exceptionally tough hide, they all failed to bury but projected from the bull until his glistening back resembled an immense black satin cushion stuck full of pins.

"Set-fire! I'm all outer bombs!" yelled Mr. Deedham despairingly across the seething waters. "Why in —, cap'n don't ye fire that chem'cal bomb ye set such a tarnal store by, an' put a kink in him. He'll

*Frighten.

never stop this side o' the Injun ocean ef ye don't."

"I been resarvin' it for jest sech a 'mergency as this, Mr. Deedham," bawled the captain, holding up the new bomb for all hands to see as he slipped it into the gun. "Now watch out!"

Eleven pairs of eyes were strained on him as he lifted the shining brass bomb-gun to his shoulder. The whale milled a little, rolling up a side like the mid-ship section of a battleship, and the gun roared.

As the recoil staggered the captain back against the supporting hand of the bow-oarsman and while the acrid powder smoke was still rasping their nostrils the men saw the bull arch his back into a great bow and then spring his one-hundred-ton body over in a complete summersault, parting the mate's line and jerking the captain's boat along like a stone skipping over the water. The whale then spouted a column of thick blood, made but a half-circle of his flurry and, with a stifled groan, rolled up, fin out.

"What d'yer think o' that *bomb now*, Mr. Deedham?" crowed the captain. "Wasn't with a —, eh? Now, altogether boys; three cheers for Perfesser Enderby. Give her hearty, boys."

With but one exception the whalemén responded so lustily that the whale-birds wheeled and screamed in affright. The exception was Mr. Deedham, who stood in the bow of his boat, a puzzled frown on his face, contemplating the dead whale.



"WHEN we was a-cheerin' Perfesser Enderby that time, the poor cuss was in jail," the captain informed Mr. Deedham as they were eating their supper in the cabin on the night of the ship's arrival in St. Helena.

"Set-fire, ye don't say!" the mate arched his brows in surprize and signaled Smuts for more coffee.

"Yes, an' it's the queerest thing I ever hearn tell on," the captain reflected. "I got a letter from the owners inquirin' did I buy any bombs of the feller for they was worthless bein' as they was full o' nothin' but sawdust an' iron-filin's. Accordin' to the letter Enderby ain't no perfesser 'tall but a machinist that'd been fired by the cartridge comp'ny what makes our bombs. They say as how he stole a lot o' bomb-cases an' after fillin' 'em to suit himself sold 'em round New London an' New Bedford.

They've got him in jail now for stealin' an' obtainin' money under false pretences."

The captain paused and jabbed a slice of meat viciously with his fork.

"But, by godfrey, Mr. Deedham," he blurted out, "I think that there cartridge comp'ny has jest put the poor — in irons like so's they can get his invention away from him. One thing's sure his bomb was loaded with the right stuff. Ye seen what it did to that whale, didn't ye?"

"Set-fire! I seen one o' our bombs do the same thing when it bust in the right place, cap'n."

"I ain't a-going' to argufy with ye 'bout that part o' it. But there's one fact ye can't get back of, Mr. Deedham, any more'n ye can get back o' yer neck, *it was the perfesser's bomb* that killed that there whale an', to my notion, in cons'quence, he the same as give us 'bout six thousan' dollars. See?"

Ch-ch-ch-chkkkk!

The explosion came from the pantry and the captain and mate twisting in their chairs beheld Smuts grinning so widely that the top of his head resembled an island, his white teeth flashing like foam on the reef.

"What the — the matter with ye, Smuts?" inquired the captain severely. "What d'yer mean bustin' out a-laughin' right afore us. Explain yerself."

"Scuse me, cap'n, sah," rejoined Smuts, composing his features by a great effort. "I humbly begs you' parding, sah. But that yah perfesser man don't done give yah nuffin. 'Twas a bluebottle fly done get yah that whale, sah."

"A-a bluebottle—. What d'yer mean by sech nonsense, Smuts?" roared Captain Mallett.

"Yes sah, that's the exuberatin' fact, sah. When I done went in the paint-locker to paint the bomb as you incinerated me to do sah, a bluebottle kept a-buzzin' very pestirofus about my face, sah. An' I makes a most discommoding swipe at it, sah, an' the bomb done fly right outer my hand throu' the door an' annihilates itself overboard, sah. I was so combusticated I was skeered to tell you, sah, so I done get one of our bombs out the store-room an' paints it an' puts it in your drawer, sah. So, yah see, sah, 'twas that fly really done give yah that whale, sah. Just a busy little come-a-visiting bluebottle, sah."

ALAD of eighteen has taken to writing to me, most appealing letters—letters of a boy who has a great soul, wakening within his growing body. He longs to be up and away to sea; having a deep taste for the open waters and for ships. He draws pictures of ships on all his letters, and draws them well and, with a pretty touch of boyish pride writes beneath the sketches, “from memory.”

He has a job, and one that pays well, and is not too hard work. It palls him. I can understand that exceedingly well; but his parents do not, nor can, and he is, evidently, their despair. So you see that I am in what might be a difficult position, with the lad saying that he wants a real friend.

I do not like to think of youth's ardent longings curbed, provided that they be honest longings. There is too little spirit of adventure amongst the boys I see about me these days. Too many seem to wish no more delectable life than that of serving behind a counter—waiting, subserviently, on their fellow men. I was brought up where most boys had some desire for piracy. I feel a severe responsibility in writing to this lad. He reads my sea-hungry verse, and my erratic tales, and remembers them, and makes most delightful remarks.

“I want to develop my character. I think I need it.”

“I would like to be very strong and manly.”

There are altogether too many leaders of our boyhood today who do little but develop a sissyfied form of what it pleases them to call religion. There is nothing so unselfish as real manhood; nothing more near akin to the minds of the great prophets whose lives were simple and whose souls courageous. It is a fine fact, quite undeniable in the light of my experience, that there are few, if any, men whose minds are not open, and indeed eager for what is really the right thing.

I was recalling, as dawn crept through my little window this morning, an evening at sea very many years ago. I was in the springing flower of my young manhood, and

excellently strong; loving my limb power and the life I led, despite this latter's hardness and not infrequent monotony. We were bound for Europe, from this Pacific coast. I had, on the outward passage, been a bit of a young roughneck—nothing very terrible, but just a hearty curser, and given to those cheerful and unthinking blasphemies that many boys and men drop into often. It was a sort of foam on life's ale; a sign of in-held and perhaps unguided virility.

In a foreign port I had lost a very dear shipmate and it had a somewhat sobering effect on me. He, like myself, had always been an ordinary and healthy man. I loved him with that bright love that young men have, one for another; one of the best things on earth, and a thing not much spoken of, because, I believe, one of our most sacred, and, perhaps, too rare affections. We had spent many and many a long night-watch alone together beneath the deep skies of mid-ocean. He was a deal older than I, and I looked up to him, wishing I might have his unshakable laugh in the face of adverse things. He seemed to glory in distress; laughing at all hardship and songfully defiant of the earth's elemental wraths.

On the way homeward I toned down my rough ways. I was not “converted,” or any such thing; but thoughtful, having one afternoon visited my pal in hospital to find him on his knees. We had never discussed the thing called religion together, I think. Our talk was given more to ships, seamanship, sea disasters and sea rescues—to discussing foreign places, queer habits of humanity, and the ways of girls. He had been eleven years at sea, I but two or three. The very things we discussed might have been, in a way, described as our religion—for man's life *should* be his religion; his devotion given boldly to it, it seems to me. One needs neither church nor book nor teacher to come near to the strange and inexplicable presence of that something, of the presence of which all humanity is aware to some extent.

On the homeward run we had a man to

replace him, an officer to take his place; for while he was an officer, I was but an apprentice. This fellow who replaced my chum was, I think, as low-minded a man as any I have ever met. He was a short, pudgy, coarse fellow, brown-skinned, and hunger-eyed for anything scented with evil. He had been many years a seafaring man; perhaps following the sea because, though unaware of it, her beauty influenced him for good despite himself. I did not know.

He had no morals, or such trifling ones that they did not matter as such. He was the sort of man to restrain whom laws are made and jails are built. Probably nothing else restrained him.

We became good friends, for though I did not have a great liking for him I was always one to make friends with every imaginable sort of man. I believe we are too given to choosing our friends, and should search, more than is our habit, into all men's minds; for every man has something wonderful in him if we can find it. Nothing on earth is rotten beyond repair. Rotteness perishes, allowing beauty to prosper in its place; though often it seems as though beauty is overpowered, yet I believe that flowers will ultimately grow and hide for ever all dung-hills.

Too many men's minds are like hot-house plants; their so-called religion a hot-house grown product, untried in the cold or heat, the wind and dust of the wide highways of life, in life's great open fields. A man must have wide experience ere he is fit to teach, or to stand, saying, "Watch me—I can show you!" Don't you think so? I'll say that life gives no man such a prerogative!

I'd far rather have a son of mine come to his ideal through something of life's "sinning," than have him grow up a dustless-sandaled Pharisee.

A few days ago a man who is looked upon as one of America's great leaders of youth said to me that he did not believe that nothing could make him believe that a man might go down to the depths of villainess and then come back, and be just as good as the man who had never fallen. I forget whether 'good' was the word he used. He implied that one who had been

far down might never be in the sight of God or man as fair and beautiful as the man who has never befouled himself with our common human errors.

Thereby he damned his religion, his God, himself, and all his brother-men. Humanity will win against the very uttermost odds, as a hardy and valiant flower, as a wind-beaten tree, that stands unflinching and near to the divine, on the edge of earth's snow-line—ever endeavoring to ascend, inch and inch, a little nearer to the heart of light. Such a speech placed him with the Pharisees.

There are none so blind as those who attribute to themselves the power and the prerogative of judging other men. Are there?

However, I digress—which is a habit I have, like an old-time sailing-ship at sea.

We had been some four months or more at sea, sailing around the South American continent, and northward toward the European shores. There was a night when things went wrong; the wind a whining devil, the sea an old black-mannered witch, the ship a shaken and distressed creature reliant upon us to save her. This little man of the sea-ports and the sea-ways was beside me, and at something going in some small way wrong where we toiled together, I let out a sudden string of oaths. I remember the night so well; the old sea-top that rose threatening toward us, and the dim shapes of shrouds and spars above our heads. I remember, too, the brown face of the sturdy little man who stared up at me, his eyes well discernible in that thickening gloom of a stormy evening, and better yet his words.

"Bill," he said, "I'm sorry you said that—I bin respectin' you all the voyage more'n any man aboard."

I still feel, as sharp as ever, the sting of that reproach.

Were I sending a son of mine to sea tomorrow I'd far rather send him in the companionship of that man who seemed so evil than in the companionship of this latter man who is, by so many, judged to be so white-minded. He would live to dream a dream nearer to the Truth for which we are all of us seeking than would any hapless lad led by the teachings of the Pharisee.



The King of No Man's Land

A Four-Part Story. Part III

By Arthur O. Friel

Author of "Thicker Than Water," "The Thirty Gang," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

BACK to back, three white men—McKay, Knowlton, and Ryan—fought doggedly against foes half seen. They had poor targets—a glimmer of steel; an arrow streaking from a clump of broad-leaved plantain; a dodging movement among a tangle of lianas.

It was an uneven fight, and when fierce yells announced the arrival of another party of savages it seemed that the white men were doomed. And then the firing in the jungle diminished. From near at hand came sudden splashes, earthy thumps, grunts and snarls of grappling antagonists.

Running feet padded and the jungle erupted a figure as grisly as a buccaneer of the Spanish Main. Indians all armed with spear and rifle, smeared with the blood of foemen, hard-jawed and slit-eyed, followed close behind him.

"It is José Martínez!" cried Knowlton.

"It is true," yelled José, his teeth flashing. "Welcome back, my companions of days gone by. What a killing you have made here!"

"Yeah! And now ye come hornin' in and busting up the game!" snorted Tim.

"Then you shall join mine," retorted José. "But come, I must move."

A little later, after much bloody fighting, the four white men sat in the big hut of the conquered Jivero community, scowling at the roof-pole from which hung a score of human heads.

"We're looking for Rand," McKay said presently.

"Rand!" exclaimed José. "Your friend and mine. I have not forgotten. It was he who first brought you three into this part of the world. He disappeared while traveling in Brazil and you found him alive, but crazed by a bullet, among the cannibals of the Rio Javary, in Brazil. And you cured

"The King of No Man's Land," copyright, 1924, by Arthur O. Friel.

his craziness by hitting him over the head with a gun."

Knowlton nodded.

"He's disappeared again—we're afraid he's gone back to the jungle."

One of José's men brought in one of the women captives. She was not a Jivero woman but a prisoner brought from the country of the Huambizas, away to the southeast. She spoke Spanish perfectly and—was very beautiful. Around her neck a gold cross was suspended. Her name, she said, was Nuné.

She refused to answer José's searching questions but the next morning, proving that she was not ill-disposed toward them, Nuné saved their lives by warning them not to eat the food prepared by the captured Jivero women—it had been poisoned.

By noon the party started back for José's stronghold. Five suns slid across the great green abyss and vanished behind the colossal wall of the Andes. Five nights welmed the forest in blackness through which moved only the creatures spawned to prey in gloom.

On the sixth day they came to the wonderful domain José had made his own. A stronghold which was practically impregnable; a fertile, sunlit plateau peopled by healthy, intelligent people who called José "king."

"On the level now," said Tim Ryan after José had explained his system of government and his ambition to make his White Ones so powerful that they could exterminate the murderous head-hunters of the jungle; "On the level now: Don't this king business make ye feel sort of tied down?"

"I ache for the voices and laughter of my own people," José said sorrowfully. "I am a white man. I am not an Indian. Yet among the Indians I must live; in the jungles I must die." He laughed harshly.

"King? *Sí*, I have made myself a king and built for myself a prison."

LATER Nuné told the men the story of her life; of how she had been stolen from her home by the Huambizas; of how a Spanish priest had instructed her and of how, when he had been killed by the savages, she had gone from settlement to settlement, unafraid, her only protection the gold cross given to her by the priest.

Further: she admitted that she loved a white man.

"He is," she said, "a leader of the Huambizas. He owns a gun and is a strong fighter. But he kills only men and will not shrink a head or carry off a woman. His eyes are green. In his hair is a white mark over the left ear. He is called Rana."

"Cripes!" muttered the Irishman. "It's him—Dave Rand!"

There was no doubt about it and, although the three friends were happy in the belief that their search was nearing an end, José was greatly disturbed. The Huambizas were his greatest enemies and, led by Rand, would be doubly powerful and menacing to the peace of his people.

"Rand must be made to see reason," he said, "otherwise he will be killed."

"Who by?" demanded Tim.

"If necessary—by me. Any man who joins the enemies of my people becomes my enemy. And a

white man who joins the head-hunters is no more a white man. Before Rand are only two ends: Capture or death!"

Hard on the discussion which followed came Lieutenant Montez, an agent of the Peruvian Government.

Montez offered José complete pardon for the crimes which had sent him into exile, reinstatement and high honors on condition that he helped Peru checkmate Ecuador's plan to seize the region east of the Andes and north of the Amazon.

It was a tempting offer but José's answer was:

"Say to your commander that I am king in my own land; that I will fight—not as a servant of Peru, but as king of a new nation; that I will remain king of my people and king of myself to the end."

Indignant, swearing to make the Huambizas his allies, Montez was escorted to the borders of José's kingdom by chosen warriors.

And then José hurriedly prepared to make war on the Huambizas, realizing that the existence of his people depended on its successful outcome.

The day of departure arrived. The guards doomed to remain at home watched the living stream of José's warriors, headed by their king, Nuné and his three white friends, pour through the rocky gorge and into the wandering track; watched until the army vanished into the vast green sea of trees beyond.

CHAPTER XV

THE KING JESTS

FOR two days the expedition of the White Ones crawled on with the smooth speed of a great serpent. It twisted and wound, sliding downward, ever downward, along dim trails which writhed in curves and bends through the shadowy labyrinth. It started at the first light which would reveal the course to the expert eyes of the scouts; it halted to eat swiftly and sparingly about midday; it stopped again only when night approached. Then it drew its steel and attacked the forest, severing poles, shearing great plantain-leaves, clipping and splitting bush-ropes, and transforming them into shelters beneath which it might sleep undisturbed by rain.

In the deepening darkness bloomed many small fires, and with the pungent smoke blended the odor of broiling meat; for, though there was little time for hunting, more or less game was knocked over each day by the scouts up ahead, who allowed no movement below or aloft to escape their quick eyes and who planted an arrow in any luckless turkey or animal within easy range. They did not attempt to carry this game after killing it; they laid it beside the

trail and passed on, leaving it to be picked up and transported by men behind. At night they coolly demanded—and received—from those men the choicest meats they had furnished that day.

Through the night all slept peacefully, with fires smouldering to thin the mosquitoes and to taunt any prowling *tigres* which might snarl hungrily in the surrounding bush. Serenely conscious of the facts that they still were in their own land and were too strong to be assailed by man or beast, they gave scant heed to the night noises. Least concerned of all was Nuné; and well she might be. After facing the prospect of making her way alone through the wilderness, she now found herself sleeping in the royal hut and protected from all danger by four very capable white men, while all about her rested scores of other formidable fighters.

"It is not as you feared it would be, is it, girl?" José twitted at the first night's camp. "Instead of walking alone, you have more men than any woman of this land ever had before. Every Huambiza woman will envy you when you tell the tale."

"Nuné did not fear," she denied. "Pi-atzo cares for his servant. Yet you are good men, and it is pleasant to walk with you."

"We are glad." The Spaniard made a mock bow. "Since we are such good men, your Piatzo should command you to tell us of the quickest way to reach Rana."

A single head-shake betokened her rejection of this argument.

"You go to make war on my people," she asserted. "If it be the will of Piatzo that you succeed, he will lead you. He does not tell me to speak."

"Your Piatzo is a fraud, and you are another," José rejoined good-humoredly. "We shall find what we seek without the aid of any Piatzo. We shall follow the lead of Chaquicuna."

A surprised look flitted over her face, but she said no more.

"Who's he? One o' the scouts?" wondered Tim.

"Chaquicuna? No. He is the other god of the Jiveros—the god of the forest, as Yacumama is the god of the waters. One of his feet is that of a man, the other that of a *tigre*. Quite likely we shall see his tracks near this camp in the morning. If we do I shall show them to her—and you shall see how strong is her faith in Piatzo."

Knowlton and McKay, sprawling in their new hammocks, squinted at him through their cigaret-smoke.

"One man foot and one tiger foot?" puzzled Knowlton. "You're joking."

"No. It is true. Have you never seen such tracks?"

"M-m-m. Seems as if I have. Let's see. Oh, sure. I get it. A man walks along, and a jaguar or a puma follows his track in the mud. Then the next man to come along sees man-tracks and cat-tracks together. And those fools believe it's done by a god?"

"Truly, *teniente*. Their wizards tell them so, and they believe it. And this girl, for all her prating about Piatzo, learned of the Jivero gods when she was small and still believes in them. You shall see."

"Just how do you expect to find Dave without her help?" queried McKay.

"That, also, you shall see," was the smiling answer.

And José curled up and went to sleep.

If he heard the coughs of near-by jaguars in the night he gave no sign of it. But immediately on awaking in the morning he slipped out of the hut and into the bush as if he knew where to go. Soon he was back, a twinkle in his eyes.

"Chaquicuna favors our march," he said

solemnly in Spanish. "He was with us in the dark hours, and I have just seen his tracks in the forest. He goes before us. Nuné, you do not believe that the god of the forest leads us against the Huambizas? Then come and see with your own eyes."

Without awaiting reply, he led the way. She followed. The Americans, after a moment of indecision, remained where they were. While José was out they had freshened a fire and boiled coffee, and now the aroma of the hot liquid was more tempting than the inspection of marks in the mud. Squatting about the little blaze, they sipped and smoked and banished the dank night chill from their bones.

Presently the pair returned: the girl lithe and fair, the man swarthy and satirical; such a contrast that Tim, watching them approach, muttered:

"Cripes! They look like an angel and the devil!"

The sober face of the angel, and the sly wink of the devil, showed that she had indeed looked on a set of tracks which had aroused her early superstitions. She seemed somewhat disturbed, and her gaze swept about the encompassing woods as if she almost expected to see a weird figure moving somewhere in the shadows. Reaching the hut, she went about the preparation of the frugal breakfast in an absent fashion. José squatted by the fire and accepted a cupful of coffee.

"The god left a fine track," he chuckled. "One of my men probably wandered a little after making camp, and a cat sniffed along his trail in the night. I am glad we have the girl with us; there are few jokes on a war-trail, and I can tease her all the way to her own land. But perhaps that will arouse the anger of Señor Tim. Hah?"

"She ain't my girl no more," grumbled Tim. "And kiddin' don't hurt her none. Leastways, mine didn't: I thought I was git-tin' in good and then she gimme the razz, same as they all do. It's a tough world for a soft-hearted li'l feller like me. But what's yer big idea in knockin' her religion? That don't git us nothin'."

"I know it. I only wanted to prove to myself that her faith in Piatzo was not so strong as to overcome her Huambiza beliefs. She is Huambiza at heart, and when we enter Huambiza country she must be carefully watched. It is not my plan to let her escape and give warning that we come."



 WITH that he began eating. The others, though saying nothing, looked at the girl with more sympathy than he had shown. In a way, her life was pathetic. Captured in infancy and grown to womanhood among savages, still she possessed the superior mind of her white ancestry. And that mind, hemmed in by the soul-crushing jungle, was eternally groping for higher things. The crazed priest who saved her had been a nobler being than the greatest man of her tribe—the wizard whom she had spurned even in horrid extremity—and to his twisted but forceful intellect she had instinctively attached herself.

In the queer, hopeless rôle of priestess which he had laid upon her, she had traveled the haunts of savagery until revulsion drove her to Macas—there to be jeered at by the rabble and returned to the jungle by the clergy. And then to the masterful mentality of the pseudo-Indian Rana she had "turned her heart"; and her heart still was with Rana, despite any brief coquetry with Tim. Reaching, blindly reaching toward the light, like a flower striving to rear itself above snake-breeding muck—such was the pitiful urge of the soul of Nuné.

In her present struggle between crude superstition and higher teachings these hardened adventurers from the North saw no joke. For once, the cynical humor of the Spaniard jarred.

"If it's all the same to you, José," Knowlton said coolly, "I wouldn't josh her any more about her gods."

"What! Ha, ha, ha! *Por Dios*, is our gold-haired *teniente* now the victim of the soft brown eyes?"

The blond man flushed. His mouth tightened, and a glint came under his silky lashes.

"No. But she's a good kid. And her beliefs are none of our — business. Get me?"

José peered at him. For an instant a hot spark glowed under his own brows. Then it vanished, and he chuckled in a good-humored way.

"As you will, comrade. I have seen men fight to the death because they did not agree about some idiotic quibble of religion, and I hope we are not such fools."

"I don't care about her religion. But there's no sense in plaguing her."

"True enough," José agreed equably.

"There is none. So let us say no more about it."

And no more was said.

Soon they were again on the march, swinging along at the steady, unhurried gait which ate up distance without apparent fatigue to the Indians or to José, but which the Americans found a bit stiff to maintain. At the end of that day's traverse Tim gazed ruefully at a heel-blistar formed by his new foot-gear, and all three welcomed the news that the next day they should ride. They had nearly reached a certain creek at which, José informed them, he had ordered a concentration of canoes.

"For the next few days," he added, "we shall travel in very close quarters, for every



canoe must carry all the men it can. So, Señores Tim and Knowlton, decide between you which shall be the one to sit close to our little friend here."

He squinted impishly at Nuné, then at the pair he had addressed. Knowlton laughed with his usual good nature.

"Put her next to Rod," he advised. "He's absolutely woman-proof. Didn't mean to pick a fuss this morning, José. I flare up too quickly sometimes."

"No fuss was picked, *amigo*. I understand you quite well, and why you spoke. Yet is it not queer how a woman can cause words between men without even knowing she does so? I shall be truly glad when she is once more free in her own land."

"Ye're dead right," agreed Tim. "This li'l lady, she's all to the mustard and game as they make 'em, and I like her fine, even if she did slip me the frosty mitt. And yet, somehow, I got a hunch we're goin' to git into a peck o' trouble about her. I dunno why; I jest feel that way. I wish she was back home, like Hozy says, and we didn't

have no woman to think about. This here Warm Beezer parade we're takin' had oughter be a stag party."

Three slight nods concurred.

"But o' course we got to treat her right and see her home safe, even if we do knock her folks for a gool right afterwards. Gee, and then what's goin' to happen to her? We go in there and blow her whole outfit off the map and yank Dave out and pack him off, and leave her all out o' luck. Dang it, we can't fix things right for her, no matter what we do."

"She must do as all other women of this land do—live whatever life and die whatever death her gods provide for her," José declared, with a careless shrug. "Perhaps to become the mate of some head-hunter and forget Señor Dave, perhaps to drink the barbasco—*¿quién sabe?*"

"Barbasco? What's that?" asked Knowlton.

"It is the vine which the Jiveros use for fishing. They crush it and throw it into slow water, and the milky juice from it kills the fish. In Brazil it is called '*timbo*.' The women captured in raids by the Jiveros sometimes use it to kill themselves."

A sudden silence fell. The Americans stared thoughtfully at their cigarets. To each came the thought that the deadly barbasco probably had furnished the one way out for the frantic mother of Nuné, a victim and slave of the barbarians. Whether or not that was true, it was more than likely that Nuné herself, when bereft of the man of her choice and abandoned forever to a hopeless existence in the shadows, would resort to the vine. To her despairing mind this impulse would, no doubt, seem the bidding of Piatzo. She who had braved the malignity of the wizard of Kwana would not shrink from the brief agony which would open the gates to oblivion.

One by one they snapped their cigaret-butts outside, drew their blankets across their chests, and lay motionless. Around them sounded only the subdued hiss of smouldering fires and the brief grunts of resting Indians. Farther out rose and fell the low, mournful notes of *pauji* turkeys murmuring in the thin light filtering down from a small moon; the soft call of a *tula-cuchillo* night monkey traveling the high branches; the weird plaint of a lonely sloth; the whistle of a tapir summoning his mate.

And in her hammock, at the end of the

row of five slung within the hut, the girl of whom these men were thinking lay without a thought for any of them. That tapir-call was in her ears, and a deeper call in her heart; and her half-closed eyes looked steadfastly toward the west, as if through the limitless leagues of jungle she saw something dearer to her than the symbolic cross nestling in her bosom.

And out of the west, unknown to her or to those around her, her fate was advancing with swift, inexorable strides.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SEED OF DISTRUST

DOWN a narrow but deep creek, which crawled black and slow through the mud of the lowland jungle, slid a long line of dugout canoes. The human serpent which recently had been slithering along the trails now had become a great water-snake.

As the commander-in-chief had foretold, every boat was crammed with men, riding so low that the gunwales were almost awash. At the head of the line glided the scar-faced Curac, acknowledged *capitán* of operations on the Pastasa side of the cordillera of the White Ones. The two canoes immediately behind carried José, McKay and Nuné as watchful idlers in the one, and Knowlton and Tim in the other. The very last boat in the wriggly file brought Aillu, guarding against any chance of straggling.

Except for the many slight sipping sounds of paddles entering and leaving the water the column journeyed in utter silence. Now and then, from far above, where the sunlight blazed, sounded the raucous cries of macaws, deadened by height and intervening foliage. Whatever life moved nearer at hand made no noise. To the eyes of the voyagers no life was visible except an occasional venomous snake in the black mud at the shores.

Abruptly a grunt broke from Curac. He rose to his knees, his carbine swinging to his shoulder. From the paddles of his canoe-men sounded a seething growl of water suddenly opposed; the boat checked as they reversed their strokes. Instantly a prolonged splash filled the air just ahead. A big, dark log which had been lying partly out of the water hurled itself down-stream, moving so fast that the startled eyes of the

Americans caught only a white surge which subsided into turbulent waves. The log was a great anaconda.

"—!" swore José vehemently. "That beast made me jump. I am glad he moved before we were above him." Then his quick grin crinkled under his mustache, and he added: "Nuné, you see that we travel with the favor of both the gods. That was Yacumama, and he did not hurt us. He has gone before us to crush our enemies."

She made no answer, but the troubled look came again into her face. As their paddlers resumed the usual speed José chuckled repeatedly over his joke. Whether the others liked it or not, this chance to tease the girl had been too good to lose. Had he looked again at her, he would have found her staring soberly at her gold cross. But he gave her no further attention.

Cruising onward, they saw nothing more of the great snake. It had vanished into the mud.

For all the quietness of their movement, they were traveling at the best possible speed. No tree-trunks blocked them, although plenty of fallen giants slanted across the steep banks above their heads. They had embarked about mid-forenoon, and no pause was made for eating. Each paddler, as he grew hungry, stopped work long enough to gobble a few mouthfuls of meat-paste and *masata*, then swung on again. At no time did any boat slacken its pace.

Hour after hour they journeyed on. At length the scattered sun-splotches began to strike into their eyes whenever McKay's compass showed the veering lane to run westward. Presently the scout-boat slowed. Curac arose and held up a hand. A series of grunts ran back from boat to boat, and paddling ceased. Curac's dugout slipped forward, heading into an apparent blockade of brush. It wormed out of sight and was gone.

Soon it reappeared. Curac spoke briefly, with no attempt at muffling his tones. The line surged forward again. Along a bush-choked passage it squirmed—and out into open water where the sun struck with dazzling brilliancy. An invisible hand grasped the canoes and swept them fast to the southward. They were in a hurrying river, flanked on both shores by the ever-present tropical timber.

"Once more we are at the Pastasa," an-

nounced José. "Now we shall make speed."

And make speed they did, for perhaps another hour. The water, though swift with the current scooting down from the distant Andes, was smooth, and the over-crowded craft suffered no mishap. As the grilling sun approached the lofty crest of the tree-line, José called to Curac, who pointed a little ahead. Within ten minutes his dugout swerved shoreward, swung into a narrow opening, and was gone. The others, following, found themselves entering a spacious lagoon, sandy-shored and concealed from the river by a narrow but dense tree-fringe. Soon the entire flotilla was inside the bottle-necked bay and debarking on the shelving sands.

"So ends this day," yawned José, stretching himself like a lean cat.

He surveyed the landing activities of his warriors, cocked an eye at the sky, and nodded. The canoes, having disgorged their men, were being moored at a little distance out, their long ropes lying loosely in order to allow for any quick rise or fall of the water caused by cloud-bursts in the distant mountains. The men not engaged in this anchoring were bringing arm-loads of long plantain-leaves from the bush and shoving their stalks into the sand, forming frail but dew-proof hoods. Weatherwise as the animals of their native woods, they foresaw that this would be a rainless night, and so were bedding on the sun-dried ground. As a matter of course, they built shelters also for their king and his companions—three of them, at the spot where the whites had landed.

The ex-soldiers, watching the rapid construction of the leaf-tents and observing the size of each, smiled reminiscently.

"Looks like a real army camp this time," commented Knowlton. "Pup-tents, with room for two buddies in each. Do your men sleep double as a regular thing?"

"Yes, when sleeping on the ground. It is for warmth. They have no covering, you know, and the ground grows cold before sunrise. Now let us bathe before the sun goes under. Curac!"

To the chieftain he gave directions, meanwhile sharply scanning the surface. No crocodiles were in sight. Warriors, obeying Curac, waded in with spears. Several of them stabbed at spots on the bottom, then lifted their lances. Impaled on the points, hideous flat creatures lashed whip-like tails:

sting-rays, furiously struggling to drive their gangrenous tail-barbs into the hardwood shafts. The disgusting things were hurled ashore, where machete-men cut them to pieces.

When the water was declared safe, the five plunged in; the men garbed only in breeches, the girl in her short *tanga*. A quick swim—with eyes ever open for some vindictive denizen of tropic waters which might have been overlooked—and they emerged refreshed. The last fierce rays of the sinking sun dried their wet garments in a trice.

Then the warriors took their dip and were out again. In the twilight were born the night fires, and to that of José came men bearing good-sized fish which they had expertly speared farther down the lagoon. While these delicacies were cooking, the Americans glanced again down the long line of shelters, before which the slim lances stood erect like deadly sprouts from the erstwhile empty sand. They contemplated the little fires spotting the half-gloom, the squatting or moving figures of fighters, the fleet of canoes resting on the water like uncouth river-beasts patiently awaiting the next day's move.

"Yeah, this here sure feels like the real thing, I'll tell the world," approved Tim. "A reg'lar gang o' he-gorillas, campin' like doughboys, not hangin' up in hammicks like navy gobs. Come on, looeey, le's go inspect quarters: see how these guys have got things laid out. No? Ye're gittin' fat and lazy. Aw wal, here's Noony, all dressed up—got her nightie on and everything. I'd rather walk with her anyways. Come on, Noony—*vamos—anda conmigo*—looka da *soldados*—you know. Savvy?"

But Nuné laughed at him and sank gracefully beside José, awaiting her share of the savory fish. Tim snorted, reddened, and sauntered away alone, pursued by the derisive laughter of José. When the meal was ready he had vanished somewhere among the huts, and a messenger sent to find him returned with the information that he was eating with a *sargento* and several other warriors.



IN THE thin light of the young moon, Aillu strode soft-footed to the royal fire and squatted awhile with and José, conferring about future plans. When the pair arose and departed

they were grinning. José, catching the inquiring gaze of the Americans, returned it as if weighing something in his mind. After a moment he glanced about in search of Tim. Finding him still gone, he laughed shortly and arose.

"Our friend Tim grows restless," he commented. "Soon we may show him something of interest. *Buenos noches*."

He stepped toward the shelter which he and McKay were to share between them.

"What's up?" called Knowlton.

José gave no sign of having heard. Reaching his leaf-tent, he squatted, frogged his way inside, and was still. Knowlton frowned.

"I don't like that," he muttered. "He heard."

McKay nodded, glancing cornerwise at him. Both smoked a minute; finished their cigarettes; shoved the coals into the sand.

"Look here, Rod," Knowlton went on, speaking low. "I'm wondering. Does it strike you that things aren't quite so open and above-board as they might be?"

"You mean——"

McKay moved his head toward José.

"Uh-huh."

"How so?"

"Well, we're sort of trailing along in the dark—taking our friend yonder on faith. He hasn't let us in on his plans since we started. I always like to have a look at what I'm going to do before I do it. You understand."

Another nod, and a silent pause.

"And another thing," Knowlton went on, as if thinking aloud. "We're here to get Dave—safe. Friend J. is out to get Dave—safe or otherwise. His main idea is to smash Dave's outfit. We three come in very handily as smashers. That's all right—as long as we don't slip into the position of subordinates and allow ourselves to be used as such. When a fellow begins to assume that I'll trail along with my eyes shut I begin to smell around a little, no matter who he is."

Once more McKay nodded, digging a thumb absently into the sand. Their value as gun-fighters was self-evident. So was the fact that the José of today was a man accustomed to commanding the services of others and to subordinating every other consideration to the development of his little kingdom. These worldly-wise veterans were no strangers to the changes

wrought in men by accession to power or by dominating ambition; they had witnessed such transformations—most of them for the worse. And it was unpleasantly obvious that Aillu and Curac, who were Indians and subordinates, had just been given some information cavalierly withheld from themselves, who were white men and presumably peers of José.

"Doesn't look good," agreed McKay. "But we'll see. Meanwhile, guess I'll turn in. Going to wait up for Tim?"

"Not I. Let him sleep with the Indians if he likes. 'Night."

Knowlton was still awake, however, when Tim came creeping into the shelter. Feigning sleep, he covertly studied the other's face in the moonlight now slanting in at the open end of the hood. Tim's nose seemed swollen, and he breathed with some difficulty. Lying down, he fingered the injured member tenderly.

"Serves you right!" Knowlton erupted. "Whose tent did you try to get into, you night-walker?"

"Huh? Aw say, d'ye think I dunno me way home? I jest been wrastlin' with one o' the boys."

"Meaning what?"

"Meanin' jest that. Been hangin' round with some hard guys down yonder—one of 'em could talk a li'l bum Spinach, and between that and makin' signs we got along fine. Had a great ol' parley-voos about nothin' much. Then we got foolin' round, and I thought it'd be a good joke to pull a few wrastlin' holds on 'em. But these guys ain't got no sense o' humor. The gink I had a holt of, he butted me in the nose so hard he knocked me for a row o' bananas, and before I could git up he dang near unjointed me. Ye know me, looey—I've handled some tough eggs before now. But I don't want no more o' that guy's stuff. Course, I had to go easy and laff like 'twas all a joke—'twas either laff or kill him, and that wouldn't do. But I tell ye these here gorillas are hard, looey, the hardest nuts I ever seen. I'm goin' to lay off 'em."

"You'd better! You wild Irishman, they're killers, every one of 'em. You're lucky that you got out of it without a broken neck."

"Faith, I believe ye. But don't tell Hozy. Them bright jokes o' his are gittin' sour on me stummick, and if he started kiddin' me about this here nose o' mine I'd likely slip

me temper and paste him one. Then we'd be in the soup for fair."

"You bet we would. Well, forget it and pound your ear. I'll keep it dark."

Tim speedily went to sleep. But Knowlton lay a little longer awake, frowning at the leaves above. Tim, too, was becoming a bit uncordial toward José. His distaste for the Spaniard's jokes might grow into downright dislike; and when Tim disliked any man he was never at pains to disguise his sentiments. Tiny seeds of discord were beginning to sprout, and Knowlton knew from previous experience that the tempers of fighting men form fertile soil for the rapid growth of such seeds.

"Things aren't so good," he thought. "If this sort of thing keeps on developing the lid may blow off sudden and hard, and somebody'll get hurt. Wish I'd kept my mouth shut to Rod tonight. Well, I'll keep it shut hereafter unless there's mighty good cause to open it. And I'll try to sit on the lid awhile and see if I can hold it down."

So, when José stared at Tim's bulging nose in the morning and Tim's jaw began to protrude, Knowlton casually said:

"That nose ought to be on me, and a couple of shiners to boot. I dreamed last night that a Jivero was at me, and before I knew where I was I'd smashed Tim in the face. Guess I'm getting nervous."

"—! Señor Tim, you must tie his hands tonight!" snickered José. "He has been eating too much monkey-meat, yes? We shall feed him on fish for a time."

Tim grunted something, and the incident passed. They were soon on the move, and if José ever learned the truth about the Irishman's mishap he said nothing. Later, in their canoe, Tim muttered:

"Thanks, looey. I woke up with a grouch, and I'd sure have started a war if ye hadn't carried the hod like that."

"Enough said. Swallow your grouches hereafter."

Down the river they swept, pestered more and more by mosquitoes as the sun rolled higher and the water grew more muddy. The Pastasa was widening, the current losing the force with which it had leaped down its long cañon from the far-off falls of Agoyan. Now the voyagers were in the real mud country where insect pests bred by the millions, and it was with vast relief that they turned, at mid-afternoon, into a shadowy stream issuing from the

western bank. There the plague of the little stinging demons lost much of its virulence.

Perhaps an hour later, the canoes halted for another night. Again camp was made in the thick bush, and Tim once more found himself forced to hang in a hammock. Except for an increase of vigilance and a more wary silence, the White Ones showed no indication of such caution as might be expected on entering enemy country. Unlike the comparatively small party with which the adventurers had first traveled, they kept the night fires burning, secure in the belief that no foe strong enough to attack them was near.

"What's the name of this stream, José?" queried Knowlton. "Or has it any name?"

"Sí. This is the Yana Yacu."

As on the previous evening, the Spaniard looked at the Americans and seemed to debate something with himself, then decide against it. At the sound of the name, Tim had suddenly become alert, and his eyes bored into the other's face. José said no more, and presently he walked away. The red man's mouth set in a hard line.

"Hey, listen here, fellers!" he rumbled. "Hozy ain't playin' square. He's holdin' out on us."

"Meaning?" demanded McKay.

"Meanin' he don't come clean. Meanin' I've got the low-down about this here, now, Yarny Yakoo place. Got it last night before that buttin' goat knocked it out o' me head. That big chief with the ugly mug—the one Hozy calls I-you—come along and give the bush-sergeant a tip, and when he was gone I worked it out o' the sarge. Up here on this Yarny Yakoo there's a gang o' head-hunters, and we're goin' to mop 'em up!

"Did he tip you guys off to that?"

"No," admitted McKay.

"Uh-huh. Wal, what's the idea? Looks to me like he don't trust us or somethin'. If he don't trust us, I sure don't trust him! And I mind he said he'd kill Dave if necessary. And he said Noony could take that there barbasco poison for all he cared, or somethin' like that. He don't care what comes of anybody but his own gang. As long's he wins out, Dave and Noony can go to — and so can Ryan and McKay and Knowlton! I'm off him!"

His mates glanced at each other, frowning, as their own brief talk of the previous night leaped into their minds.

"Sure you didn't misunderstand that Indian?" clipped McKay.

"Dead sure!"

"All right. Keep mum." The captain's tone hardened. "We'll be dummies just a little longer—and see what happens."

CHAPTER XVII

THE FRUIT OF DISCORD

IT WAS about noon on the second day thereafter when the scout-boat of Curac suddenly slowed, then stopped. Its bow-paddler had picked something from the water, and Curac was examining it. As the canoe of José slid alongside, the chief mutely held out the find to his commander.

It was nothing but a chip, hacked from some tree by a dull machete or stone ax. Yet it was indisputable evidence of the presence of men somewhere beyond. José nodded, and the leading boat resumed its way. But now it traveled with redoubled stealth, and the attitudes of its paddlers betrayed tense watching of everything ahead.

Before long another sign was spied and seized. This time it was a two-inch, convex flake of charred wood. To the eyes of McKay, who glanced at it, it told no story except that it had been in fire. But to Curac it was no mere débris from a camp-fire, but a fragment gouged from an embryo canoe in process of construction by flame and ax. This obviously betokened the existence of a settlement.

The Yana Yacu here was hardly a stone's throw in width, though deep enough to afford unhampered progress. Yet Curac, instead of pressing on up the river to find the town, began keenly watching along the shores as if seeking some subsidiary stream. Slowly the tangle on either side slid past, and with inaudible strokes the paddles rose and fell. Then a soft grunt floated back from the scarred veteran, and his bow nosed into an opening at the right.

José, without looking backward, raised an arm high overhead and held it rigid a moment. The signal passed back from canoe to canoe until every crew along the winding waterway was warned. Meanwhile the king's boat glided past the mouth of the tributary, grounding at the shore a little above. The craft of Curac, moving

with utter silence, was proceeding up the new stream.

In steady succession the crowded canoes behind crept up and berthed above that of José, disgorging their crews into the bush. Nobody spoke. The only sounds were rustlings among the leaves and the distant yapping of toucans somewhere farther up-stream. At length all were ashore and the canoes secured to snags or bush-stalks. Then José, who had been critically watching, turned to the Americans and calmly spoke.

"I am hungry," he said. "Let us eat some monkey-paste and——"

"Cripes!" snorted Tim. "Eat? How quick do we git into action?"

"I have not said anything about action, have I?"

"No, ye dummy, but we're wise. Let's go!"

José looked keenly at him, then laughed. To Aillu, who now stood beside him, he muttered some command. The chieftain passed into the bush, grunting briefly to the warriors. They coolly got their tubes of meat and *masala* and fell to eating.

"All in good time, friend Tim, all in good time," said José. "The scouts must first smell out the land, and it may take some time. So we had best be patient and eat. And how do you know so much about my purpose here?"

"Never mind. Mebbe I dremp it last night—though I still dunno why ye come here to scrap with Jiveros when we want to git to the Warm Beezers."

"That is what you shall soon learn."

"Yeah? Thanks!"

Tim's tone was sarcastic. He might have said more, but a head-shake by McKay silenced him.

Some time passed. José was taciturn. The others ate and waited. At length a voice began to mumble, and the Americans stared in astonishment at Curac, reporting to his commander. There had been no sound to indicate his coming, and he seemed to have materialized from the air. Aillu, too, was now standing beside José and listening.

After a short conference the pair turned away and were gone in the bush. José, lounging against a tree, carefully dug up a little rubber pouch and began making a cigaret.

"Say!" blurted Knowlton. "When do we fight?"

"Not yet. There is plenty of time. The place is not far. Let my *capitanes* arrange their forces."

"Big place?" asked McKay, moving his head in the supposed direction of the Jivero settlement.

José shrugged noncommittally, struck a match and puffed at his roll of bark and tobacco, regarding the restive trio with a mocking expression.

He smoked the cigaret very deliberately, and not until it was reduced to a tiny stub did he move. Meanwhile the Indians nearest at hand remained squatting, only the slight movements of their carbines or lances betraying the tension of the wait. Those who had landed farther up-stream were out of sight in the thick growth. At last, with the same deliberation, José moved to his canoe.

"*Vamos*," he said.

McKay strode to the dugout, and Knowlton and Tim to theirs. Then McKay checked, glancing at Nuné, who had been an impassive waiter and who now sought to resume her usual place.

"Going to take her into this row?" he asked.

"Why not? Are we not able to defend her? Get in."

Nuné was in place already, and José also. With no further comment, McKay took his own place. The paddlers gave way, and the canoe glided down-stream, then swerved into the tributary where Curac had gone scouting. Curac now had mysteriously disappeared again, and José was heading the line.

The boat proceeded slowly. McKay, narrow-eyed and tight-jawed, peered fixedly ahead. José sat more loosely, though with rifle ready. Nuné remained impassive. In the next canoe, Knowlton and Tim leaned forward, tense and eager. And behind them came other dugouts bristling with weapons.

Bend after bend was rounded, and still no sign of Jiveros was seen. Suddenly every man jumped as if fired upon from the bush. The silence had been shattered by an inferno of noise.

Gun-shots crashed in a sustained roar. A howling chorus of ferocity mingled with a prolonged screech of fear and hate. The uproar came from some point not far ahead, the noise rolling down the tree-arched creek like a wall of water sweeping through a tunnel. And it kept coming.

The canoe of the king leaped ahead under sudden powerful strokes of the paddles. From José snapped a sharp command that cracked like a whip-lash. The paddlers grudgingly fell back into the previous slow stroke.

McKay, usually holding himself in cool control, broke his restraint with a wrathful demand:

"What's the idea? Why don't you get going?"

"Hey, snap into it!" came Tim's growl. "What the ——'s busted up ahead there?"

"You shall see," came José's maddening answer to both. And he held his men to the same crawl.



THE tumult approached, yet diminished. Abruptly it ended. The canoe, rounding another bend, emerged beside a semi-cleared space of rising ground. At the water's edge lay a row of canoes, and a few rods up the shore a polepalisade rose among the tree-trunks still standing.

Through a gap in the wall suddenly darted three Jiveros, who dashed straight for the empty canoes. Before the Americans could catch an aim at them, gun-shots crackled from above. The Jiveros sprawled headlong and lay still. In the gateway stood other Indians—lighter and leaner Indians—who lowered rifles from their shoulders and turned back into the enclosure. They were White Ones.

For an instant there was silence. The truth flashed over the three Northerners. While José kept them waiting, he had sent Aillu and Curac with a strong force by land to attack and conquer the Jiveros.

Tim exploded.

"——!" he raved. "Of all the dirty, rotten low-down tricks ye ever pulled, Hozy Marteeny, this is the limit! Who in —— d'ye think we are—a bunch o' school-teachers viewin' the battlefields after the war? We ain't good enough to fight alongside o' yer lousy Injuns, hey? We stay back with the woman, hey? This is one more o' yer smart jokes, hey? It's the last one ye'll pull on me!"

"Tim! Shut up!" barked Knowlton.

Tim, fighting mad, turned on him with a glare and a growl. More hot words sprang to his lips—but died unspoken. Knowlton had once been his superior officer, and in any clash of wills between them the ex-

sergeant's old habit of soldierly obedience still reasserted itself. And the former lieutenant now was no longer an easy-going partner—he was once more a stone-faced, steel-eyed, tight-mouthed officer. Under the fierce intensity of his gaze Tim clamped his jaws together and was dumb.

Then Knowlton shot one glance at José. It was as sharp as a rapier—and as cold. The next instant the canoes grounded at the shore.

The three Northerners stepped out. Without a word McKay strode away from José and joined his partners; and without another look at him they advanced up the hill.

For a full half-minute the king of the White Ones stood and stared after them. Though Knowlton had stopped Tim's tongue, it was unmistakably plain that the Irishman's words expressed the feeling of all three of them; plain, too, that they were unitedly marching away from him because they preferred his room to his company. A red wave swept over the Spaniard's leathery cheeks.

"——!" he hissed.

Then, gulping down his sudden rage, he followed them. His Indians, in a compact mass, came at his back.

Through the gap in the wall passed the Northerners, and into a stumpy clearing where stood several peak-roofed huts. Men were moving rapidly about, but there was no more fighting. Here and there a spear or a machete rose and struck downward, ending the life of some wounded Jivero found among the stumps. Herded together at a central hut seemed to be a knot of prisoners. Bodies littered the ground; bodies of chocolate-skinned head-shrinkers, some with weapons beside them, more with none. It was apparent that this affair could hardly be called a fight. Caught by surprise and shot down—the wounded now being ruthlessly slain—the Jiveros were simply massacred.

The Americans knew well that this was the jungle mode of warfare; that it was the favorite method of the head-hunters themselves; and that any mercy to them would be asinine. Yet the sight of unarmed men riddled with bullets was hardly conducive to a restoration of good feeling toward José. At the same time, it blunted the edge of their resentment at having been kept out of the affair. They would have taken little

pleasure in participating in such an attack.

Warriors of the White Ones, their usually impassive faces aglow with battle-lust, grinned wolfishly at them, then passed on in search for survivors. The three marched on to the central hut. There, as they expected, they found a round-up of women, guarded by hard-eyed Sumataras. They found also, however, something totally unexpected—three live Jivero men.

One of the Sumataras—recognized by Tim as the *sargento* with whom he had supped at the Pastasa lagoon—called their attention, by an unintelligible sentence and a gesture, to the male prisoners. He seemed quite proud of the fact that they had been caught alive and unhurt except for bloody bumps on their heads. The Northerners looked blankly at him. When other Jiveros were slain at sight, why should these be spared? And, above all, why should a White One be proud of it?

All three of the captives were bound with bush-cord, and two of them were darting glances about them as if momentarily expecting death. The third—a tall, powerful savage with waist-long hair, a profusion of tooth necklaces, and snaky lines tattooed on chest and arms—glowered at his captors and ground his black filed teeth with rage. At the white men, too, he glared ferocious hate. For a minute or two he stood with malevolent gaze centered on them, defiant in the face of an unknown fate. Then his beady eyes focused beyond them. Into the insolent orbs crept a flicker of fear.

José had come up. His gaze was fixed on the big Jivero, and so baleful was it that the savage flinched. He said nothing. He only stood there, holding the head-hunter's eyes, piercing to the core of his bestial soul, until beads of cold sweat stood out on the brown face and the thick lips twitched nervously.

"Who caught this one?" the Spaniard demanded, without removing his gaze.

"Yo," proudly announced the *sargento*, slapping himself on the chest.

"You are a good warrior. I shall remember."

Whereat the *sargento* swelled. To the listening Americans the mystery now was clear. The prisoners lived because José had previously ordered that captives be taken.

The big Jivero suddenly moved his head, twisting it aside to break the contact with

the Spaniard's torturing eyes. His fellow-prisoners, after one look, had kept their gaze away from the conqueror. Now José glanced again at them, looked at the women and children, scanned the huts, and gave short commands. All the women were herded away toward the nearest house. The two cowed Jivero men were seized and dragged toward another. The tall savage, prodded by a red-stained spear-point and directed by a harsh growl from the *sargento*, turned and slunk into the central house.

Not once had José looked at the Americans. Nor did he look at them now. Ignoring them as utterly as they had ignored him after landing, he stepped toward the house into which the Jivero and his guards had gone. But just then, from warriors farther out, came a shout which halted him.

"—!" he muttered. "Is it so?"

From a house some distance away, a warrior came running among the stumps, leaping upward now and then to avoid fallen Jiveros. In one hand he held some small object which he repeatedly raised aloft. As he approached he called something.

José stared blankly at the Northerners, all animosity knocked from his mind. To them he spoke:

"So end the ambitions of republics in this land of devils, and so fare the messages of kings. It seems that Peru will wait long for the message it sought from me."

The runner pattered up, stopped, and extended his hand. From it, dangling by black hair uncut for many weeks, hung a freshly cured little human head. So expertly preserved were its features, so life-like was the thin smile into which some diabolical Jivero had formed the mouth, that it seemed again to be leering at the comely wine-pouring girl in the council-hall of the White Ones.

The Peruvian Force of Security of the East would indeed wait a long time—through all eternity—for the reappearance of Lieutenant Manuel Montez.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TEMPTATION OF TIM

"A BOLD, brave fellow," mused José, somberly regarding the little face which now seemed to mock at all human desire. "I will gamble that he took more

than one Jivero into the land of shadows with him. And he shall have a fitting funeral."

To the *sargento* who had captured the big Jivero he gave commands. At once the man went away. José, carrying the head, entered the house. After a glance at one another, the Americans lounged in after him. Nuné, who had come up with the canoe men as a matter of course, followed.

The interior of the place differed little from the customary head-hunter habitation. The usual low bamboo couches and high meat-racks were there; clay pots and jars lay about the dirt floor; and overhead were suspended blow-guns, spears, baskets and ripening bunches of plantains. One of the beds, however, was somewhat more ornate than ordinary, its rails being decorated with feather-work snugly glued down; and on the wall above it hung a magnificent black-jaguar hide and a cluster of shrunken heads. From these indications, as well as its central location, the strangers judged it to be the home of the chief of the tribe; and the powerful savage, they assumed, was the chief himself. This proved, however, to be not quite correct. The chief was dead, and the captive was the wizard of the settlement.

Ringed by menacing foes, he stood with a hang-dog air, awaiting whatever doom might be pronounced on him. To his evident surprise, the Spaniard ordered his bonds removed. Then he was made to squat before the decorated couch, and on that couch José took his seat, the head of Montez still in his hands. On that head the Jivero's black eyes fixed. The house grew as still as a tomb.

In harsh accents, the outlaw king began to talk. His words were incomprehensible to the Americans, and, apparently, to the prisoner. The threat in the rasping tones, however, was unmistakable. When José ceased, another voice commenced. It was that of the ubiquitous Curac, translating into the Jivero tongue the words spoken in Sumatara by his ruler. If anything, his voice was even more rough than that of José; and his face, usually so deceptively good-humored because of his upturned scar, now seemed to wear the grin of a demon. The Jivero again began to sweat.

When Curac had finished, the captive made no answer. Again José talked; again Curac repeated. Still no answer. The

beady eyes flickered from side to side as if seeking a chance for a desperate lunge for safety—and finding none. José, leaning forward, aggressively began a third speech.

Apparently the session would last for a considerable time. McKay and Knowlton, keenly watching faces, tried to deduce the nature and purpose of the inquisition. Tim, still rankling, found the meaningless jargon and the brow-beating by José jarring on his temper. He swung on a heel and walked out of the place.

Outside he paused, viewing the surroundings and trying to decide which way to turn his restless feet. The Sumataras now were moving about the clearing and picking up Jiveros, whom they bore to a spot near by and piled in a heap. As Tim watched, a slight sound behind him drew his head around. On his morose face dawned a smile. Nuné had followed him.

She smiled straight back at him, and smiled most winsomely. More than that, she manifested a desire to walk with him. With a slight inclination of the head she indicated an empty house near at hand. He needed no second invitation. In a few minutes they were out of the scorching sun, and also out of sight and hearing of those remaining in the central structure.

There, in the shadows, she speedily made plain the object of her unexpected move.

"Teem," she said, "which is most your friend—Rana, or that man called José?"

"Rana!" The tone was sourly emphatic.

"And those two with you—Rodrigo and the light one—are they true friends to Rana?"

"*Sí!*"

"Is the man José your master? Must you obey him?"

The question probably was not meant to infuriate Tim, but it did.

"Him?" he sputtered in English. "Not in a million years! He's a swell-headed mutt that's so bloated up over bossin' a few Injuns he thinks he can use white men the same way. But he's through! Thinks we're a bunch o' dumbbells. Aw, ye don't understand."

In Spanish he said:

"No. We are free men. He is master of nothing but Indians."

She smiled again, seeming pleased by the obvious anger she had evoked, and stole a little closer to him.

"It is well," she said. "You are strong

men and true friends of Rana. Nuné is a true friend of Rana. That José is not a friend of Rana. He goes to kill Rana and my people who are the friends of Rana. He laughs at you and your friends. He makes monkeys of you three strong men.

"Why do you not leave him? He thinks he is very wise. Yet he does not know where Rana can be found. With his many men he can kill Jiveros who did not see him coming. A woman could do that. But with all his men he can not find Rana. Nuné can find Rana. Nuné would go fast to Rana. Nuné can lead you to him. Why do you not leave this José behind and go with Nuné to your friend?"

The red man's eyes widened.

"*Cómo? How?*"

"It is easy—if you dare. See. The day is old. All will stay here tonight. At the water are many canoes. The moon will shine. Speak quietly to the tall man and the light one. When all sleep, come with Nuné to the water. We go. We go fast. We go long. We go far ahead of these others. Nuné is strong. She will work hard. With four paddles, with your guns, with Nuné to guide and show you the tricks of the forest, we speed to Rana. So you shall find your friend. So you shall make a monkey of the so-wise man José."

For a moment Tim was swept by hot impulses. The alert girl had plucked shrewdly at the most vibrant strings in his make-up. To reach Rand—to "beat Hozy to it" and thus, as Nuné said, to make a monkey of him—that would be a retaliation which appealed irresistibly to his present mood. Too, the lure of romantic adventure, of swift action, of a death-defying dash through head-hunter land with only his two partners and the girl—this struck a resonant chord. And those subtle words—"if you dare"—spoken by a girl whose impelling gaze burned into his and whose seductive will strove to bend him to the fulfillment of her desires! For ages, men with blood far colder than that of Tim Ryan have fallen before those three words spoken in that way.

Yet Tim's was an honest soul, and a belligerently straight-forward one. To sneak away at night, like a deserter, was an idea which did not appeal. To him it smacked of cowardice, of treachery. His way of leaving José, if he should leave, would be to walk off in broad daylight and

truculently defy the Spaniard and all his gang to stop him. Cunning and stealth were foreign to his nature, just as they were instinctive to jungle-bred Nuné. Yet Nuné was playing the game fairly enough. She was a captive, seeking only to escape and reach the man of her heart in time to save him; the three Americans would be stalwart defenders for her in a land where she would need them, and they claimed to be friends of Rana; so she was frankly taking advantage of her opportunity.

While Tim wavered, she added:

"To stay with José will do no good. To him Nuné will never show the way. Without the word of Nuné he will fail. When we reach my country——"

She did not finish, but he understood. At the Morona she would escape alone somehow, or die in the attempt. Again he felt the impulse to turn his back on José and fare forward with his own countrymen.

"*Bien.* I will speak to my friends," he promised.

She smiled again.

"It is well. Now let us go back to them. Nuné would hear what is said."

"Do you understand their talk?"

"*St.* The man José asks how the head of the white man was taken. Come."

They emerged again into the sun. As they walked back, Tim was thinking hard; but not too hard to affect carelessness for the benefit of any watching eyes. In fact, he yawned as if bored by the whole place, and stopped a couple of times en route as if vainly seeking something of interest. Reaching the house, he and Nuné sauntered inside as casually as they had come out. The "third degree" was still in progress, and nobody gave them any attention.

A change had come over the Jivero. His eyes had become steady, and in growling tones he was talking. José, who seemed to have a little knowledge of the Jivero language, apparently understood some of the talk but not all of it. When the captive was silent Curac translated. José nodded, looked down thoughtfully at the head of Montez, and carefully laid it aside.

At that moment a warrior of the White Ones walked in, stepped to the side of his king, and muttered several sentences. He was one of those who could speak and understand Spanish quite well, but now he used his own language. When he had done, José sat very still. Presently he voiced one

laconic word. The warrior stepped back and loitered at the doorway.

The face of the king seemed to grow sharp. But he looked neither to right nor to left, and presently he resumed talking to the Jivero. As Curac repeated, the captive stared. His heavy visage began to brighten. He answered quickly—almost eagerly. As the conversation went on, he actually grinned. At length he sprang up, vehemently repeating something, and laughing aloud.

The Spaniard's fierce expression relaxed. He spoke once more, in a warning tone. The Jivero responded earnestly. With a wave of the hand José signified that the session was ended, and the savage turned to the door. Closely guarded, but unbound, he walked out, head in the air and confidence in his strut.

And as he went, Nuné, who understood what had just been said, looked after him with sudden dismay.



WITH his exit, the house was deserted by all except the Spaniard, the Americans, the girl, and the Sumatara who had last come in, and who still lingered at the door. José rose and faced the others, squarely and steadily eyeing each in turn. His harshness was gone, but he was very grave.

"Señores," he said formally, "it is time that we reached a better understanding. There has come between us a feeling which must not continue. Perhaps I am at fault. Perhaps not. There are certain things to be said on both sides. Perhaps you would like first to say what is in your minds. I listen."

McKay instantly accepted the opening.

"Quite right," he clipped. "The sooner we settle this thing, the better. We're not satisfied with the way you're handling matters. We've been leaving things in your hands because we used to be partners, and we expected to be on equal footing this time. It seems to be otherwise. You're running things with a high hand and keeping us in the dark. You're virtually assuming the rôle of boss. We've had enough of it."

"We're indebted to you in many ways, and we're duly grateful. But we're not subordinates of yours. We're either your partners in finding Dave, or we're not. If we are, we're going to know your plans from now on. If we're not, we'll cut loose from

your outfit and go it alone. That's all."

"Attaboy, cap!" approved Tim. "Just what I was thinkin', meself."

José bowed slightly, ignoring Tim.

"You have spoken plainly, as is always your way," he said. "And perhaps I am to blame. But do not think I have wished to be boss over you. Perhaps I have grown too much accustomed to directing affairs and have seemed to slight you. Yet until now you have not questioned the wisdom of my actions. You are angered because I fooled you today and made you miss a fight. But you will remember that I too missed that fight and stayed with you. I do not often stay behind my men."

"It was a joke of mine, but there was a reason behind the joke. It was ill-taken, and I am sorry. But it is past. I shall now do what I was intending, before we came here, to do at this time—to make things clear. I only wished to make sure of success in what I intended to do here. Then I would speak."

"You have wondered how I was to reach Señor Dave. I had no man to guide me to him. I came here to get such a guide. I have him. He is that Jivero who has just gone out. He is the wizard of this place, and knows how to reach the Huambizas who have lately been raiding so fiercely. He will lead us. I have promised him his life and freedom if he leads us right; death, if he does not. Since the Huambizas are his enemies, he is more than glad to do it."

"That was my object in attacking this place—to kill all but a few and to pick from those few a guide. I ordered that the wizard be caught if possible, because the wizard among these people is a fighter and goes on the raids, so that he knows all that can be known; also, he has more brains than any one else. It was done as I ordered, and we now have our man. You know as well as I how important it is to have such a man. If I had not played a joke on you and held you back, we should not have him now. Why? Because you could not approach this place so quietly as to avoid giving warning; no white man can; and this wizard would not have been taken alive if not caught by surprise. So my joke was not so childish."

"As for my next plans, they are simple: To continue up the Yana Yacu; cross the divide through a low pass; go down a stream which almost meets the Yana Yacu, but

flows west instead of east; and so reach the Morona. We shall lose no time. So, Señor Tim, it will not be necessary for you and Nuné to steal away tonight."

The concluding words came so unexpectedly that Tim stood petrified. McKay and Knowlton wheeled and stared at him; saw his dazed expression, and turned frowning faces to José.

"What do you mean by that?" snapped McKay.

"Ask Tim. Señor Tim, there are always two sides to a hut—the inside and the outside. What is said inside can be heard by good ears outside, unless spoken very low."

Then Tim understood. He reddened furiously.

"So ye sicked a spy on us, hey? This here guy in the door that come and spilled the beans in yer ear jest now was listenin' over yonder, hey? Wal, lemme tell ye I don't give—"

"Wrong!" José cut in. "I did not even know you were out of this house. But orders were given long ago that this girl must be watched at all times, day and night; and my orders are obeyed. My men—my 'lousy Indians', Señor Tim—are faithful to me at all times. I have found few white men of whom I could say the same. Indeed, I do not know that I have found any."

Abruptly he turned away. Slowly he walked toward the other end of the house and stood there, looking at the ground. There was a hurt tone to his last words, a sudden loneliness in his manner, a weary droop to his shoulders, that stopped Tim's mouth as if an invisible hand had clapped over it. McKay and Knowlton, too, lost their angry flush and looked queerly at Tim, then at the dejected figure of Nuné. There was a silence.

With the same weary movements, José came back again, looking now at the little head of Montez. Gently he picked it up.

"Here was one man who died faithful," he mused. "Faithful to his country and his commander, though over-bold. It seems that he forsook the river and came up the Yana Yacu, probably thinking to reach the Morona sooner in that way. He met Jiveros. Four of them he killed before the rest could finish him. He was a man."

Tim found his voice. He spoke doggedly:

"Yeah. A reg'lar guy. About this thing

over yonder, now, listen here. I ain't makin' no excuses to nobody. But if yer spy said me and her was fixin' to beat it—jest the two of us—he's a liar. The idea was to put it up to cap and looney and see how they felt about cuttin' loose and goin' on our own. Now I don't have to ask 'em. That's all—except' this much: Any guy that tries to make it hot for Noony for talkin' to me about it, I'll blow his block off. And that's that!"

José shrugged, glancing with a mirthless smile at Nuné.

"I do not blame her," he denied. "It is only natural. And it seems that your *capitán* and *teniente* had the same idea in mind without her suggesting it. *Bien*. Do we understand one another now, and shall we continue as partners? Or do you who have been my comrades wish to go your own way?"

The three looked searchingly at one another. McKay voiced the verdict—

"As partners—we'll stick."

"*Bueno!*" A quick smile lit up the somber face. "It would grieve me much if a Huambiza girl should carry away my three last partners, as the Huambizas have taken away the man who once was partner to all four of us—Señor Dave. Let no more be said. Now we shall make a fitting grave for another white man. Come."

At a sign from him, the loitering Sumatara vanished through the doorway. Silently the five filed out, Tim giving the girl a reassuring pat on one shapely shoulder, but evoking no smile in response. She who had so recently hovered on the bright verge of hope now looked into the black waters of despair, for she knew quite well what use would be made of the Jivero captive—she had heard his fervent promises to lead the way and help to kill the Huambizas of Rana. In her sudden despondency, her former staunch faith in the aid of Piatzo became a broken reed. Her rôle of priestess had slipped rapidly from her in her recent new environment, and now she was only a heart-sick girl.

Machete-men, waiting near, entered the house and fell swiftly to work. With blades and hands they bored in the earth floor a deep hole. Then they refilled it, packed the earth hard, and came out. Of Lieutenant Manuel Montez no trace now remained above ground.

Then other men, in an endless chain, bore

the Jivero bodies inside and stacked them like wood. When that was done, great heaps of thatch torn from other houses were piled around the walls, and on this in turn dry logs and chunks were built up. Soon a hissing, crackling pyre flamed high, and a tower of black smoke ascended and mushroomed out in the upper breezes.

"Roast, you *demonios!*" was the valedictory of José. "Roast here today and burn forever in the place where your father, *El Diablo*, has welcomed you back home. And you, Manuel *mio*, laugh! Laugh loud and long, while above you the chief of this tribe and his men turn to ashes upon your grave. While white men walk this land the murder of a white man shall not go unavenged. And, though we white men may not always agree, we must stand together until death—and afterward."

CHAPTER XIX

THE BIRD OF EVIL OMEN

IN THE same house where Nuné and Tim had entered into tentative conspiracy that afternoon, she and her four companions slept.

The doorway was open, and the moon alternately shone brilliantly and vanished behind drifting clouds. To all appearances, it was an ideal time for such a stealthy departure as Nuné had suggested. Yet things were not as they seemed; for outside, squatting against the wall on either side of the door, wide-awake sentries kept vigil. She knew this; knew, too, that the three Americans were once more at peace with her captor and would not now go from him. So, stoically awaiting some future opportunity for escape, she had given herself to tranquil slumber.

The vigilance of the night guards was not confined to the house of the king. Among the other habitations, too, motionless sentries kept watch, lurking in the shadows of the low eaves, resting easily, yet alert to every sound or movement in the settlement. The Jivero wizard, lying among a score of sleeping Sumataras, also had a couple of personal jailers whose eyes never closed, and whose ready machetes were an effectual discouragement to any attempt at departure.

The other two male prisoners had mysteriously disappeared as soon as it was

known that José did not need them—the disappearance being made permanent by a couple of Sumatara spearmen and by the funeral pyre. As for the Jivero women and children, they were to be left free when the White Ones moved on westward, since the army could not encumber itself with them; but they now were being guarded on general principles.

The fire at the central house now had done its work and burned itself out. Within the clearing all was quiet; spying eyes would have seen only a village apparently buried in slumber. And when at length spying eyes did rise above the palisade, that was all they did see.

The dusky, long-haired head in which those slant orbs were set hung just above the top of the wall at the rear, the body beneath it dangling from a length of twisted vines which it had deftly looped over the peak of a stake. That head remained motionless for minutes, scanning the houses within, listening to the muffled snores stealing from them. From the point where it poised, the destruction of the chief's house was not noticeable, as other roofs were in the way.

Reassured, and tiring from the strain of hanging by the hands, the apparition drew itself up and scrambled over. It landed with a slight thump of bare heels and a clatter of bow and arrows slung down its back. Warily it glanced around. Then it stole toward the space where the chief's house should be. The moon, flashing out more brightly as a thin cloud passed off, showed the newcomer to be a gaunt Jivero youth, who limped as he advanced. Around one calf was wrapped a bungling bandage—evidently his breech-clout, as he was stark naked.

At the impact of his fall, hidden guards had tensed. In the black shadows under the eaves, wolfish eyes turned on the limping figure. After a few steps he seemed to sense the menace. He slowed, reaching up to unsling his bow.

With the dazing speed of a pouncing jaguar a sinewy Sumatara sped at him. A hoarse croak burst from the invader. Before he could assume the offensive he was knocked sprawling. The captor fell hard on him, crushing him down.

Other sentries leaped from the shadows and swept the top of the palisade with their eyes. No other head showed. The intruder had come alone, and from afar. His

weakness, his thinness, and his wound indicated misfortune and a difficult traverse.

In the hands of any other White One, his end would have been swift; indeed, he would have been dead when he struck the ground. But it happened that his captor was that *sargento* who had caught the wizard and earned the praise of the king. Shrewdly the warrior saw here a chance to distinguish himself further: to display his prowess again to his ruler. Perhaps this new prisoner might be useful to King José. At any rate, it would do no harm to find out—and to record another point to his own credit. Wherefore the stunned youth found himself yanked to his feet, roughly disarmed, and hustled to the house where slept the commander-in-chief.

José awoke to find one of his sentries beside him, diffidently explaining that a new prisoner waited without. He arose at once and glided outside. There stood the dazed captive, helpless in the iron grip of the *sargento*, who stood with face proudly lifted so that the moonlight would make plain his own identity.

Keenly the Spaniard surveyed both, missing no detail. A slight smile passed over his face, but he spoke gruffly.

"Do you who caught the strong wizard now wake your king to show him this miserable thing?" he demanded. "How came it here? Why did you not squash it like a bug?"

"It came over the wall, and I did squash it," was the somewhat sheepish answer. "But then I thought it might know things useful to my king. So I let it live and brought it here. Shall I kill it?"

José chuckled, pulled his mustache, and gave the *sargento* another look.

"You have a head and you think with it," he complimented. "Some day you may become a *capitán*." Then, eying the captive: "No. Let him live until day. Give him food. Put him in the house with the wizard. And put— Hm! Let me see."

Turning, he surveyed the sentries beside his door:

"Hatun! Here!"

An intelligent-looking warrior stepped forward.

"Hatun, you understand the language of these people. Go now to the house where lies the wizard. Awake some man there and send him elsewhere to sleep. Take his place. Lie still and seem to sleep—but

keep awake. Hear whatever is said between the wizard and this new man. In the morning tell me of their talk. Go now."

Hatun swung away. José stood several minutes, saying nothing, giving Hatun time enough to rout out some sleeper and substitute himself. Then he motioned to the *sargento*. The latter, walking on air because of his success, but not relaxing his merciless grip on the youth, went at once. His captive went dumbly, completely bewildered both by finding enemies where he had expected friends and by the fact that those enemies were not slaying him.

With a yawn, José turned lazily back toward his bed. In the doorway he stopped suddenly, a scowl darkening his face. The sentries, too, looked somberly out at the jungle beyond. From it had drifted a dread sound.

Far out, faintly heard, but none the less dismal, a creature of evil omen was wailing under the moon. It was the *alma perdida*—the "lost soul"—whose weird cries spell calamity: a bird, seldom heard and almost never seen, which, according to the legend of the jungle men, learned its harrowing plaint from a child lost and perishing in the wilderness. Again and again it sounded; and now it came more plainly, as if dire doom were creeping closer and closer to the army of the White Ones. At length it died and was heard no more.

Not until then did José move onward to his couch. He said nothing to his sentries. Nor did they speak to one another. They squatted motionless, as before, fixedly regarding the black forest whence the sound had come. And within, where his partners and Nuné slept on undisturbed, José lay staring up at the shadowy roof, troubled by coincidence and memory. Coincidence had brought that foreboding cry hard on the arrival of that emaciated Jivero; and, for no apparent reason, memory jabbed him with the vision of his wives and children weakly guarded in their distant stronghold. The uneasiness which had troubled him before his departure returned tenfold. Too, there arose before him in the shadows the little leering head of Montez, and again he heard his own words—

"So end ambitions in this land of devils."

For a long time he lay there before drowsiness again stole over him. When he slept, the frown still stayed on his face.



THE moon crept downward and vanished. Guards were changed.

The dank chill of late night gradually penetrated to the marrow of the new watchers, and they arose and moved about in short patrols. Beyond the wall roared hungry *tigres*, bold now that the light was gone, but baffled by the stockade. Down at the creek frogs hammered in rapid-fire chorus, and somewhere near at hand a tree-toad grumbled in bass tones like a lunatic voicing senseless gibberish. At length the gloom paled; black blots began to take on shape and form; the voices of the jaguars died out, and a new wave of discordant noise began to roll from the trees. Day was at hand, and the birds and animals of the daytime were hurling their waking clamor into the air. And inside the *chonta* walls men and women opened their eyes stretched, and arose.

"Mornin', kink!" saluted Tim, reaching for his cigaret-makings. "We're still here, Noony and all. And this here is a new day—in more ways than one. What's the layout for this lovely mornin'?"

His tone was as jovial as if no rancor had ever arisen, and it was evident that by-gones were by-gones.

"My first intention is to smoke a *cigar-rillo*," smiled José, producing his home-grown tobacco. "Then to eat. Next to put up a good cross over the spot where Montez lies. And then to move out westward. Is that satisfactory to all?"

"Absolutely," agreed Knowlton. "Especially the eats and the moving. Hello, who's this chap? Wants to see you, I guess, José."

At the doorway stood Hatun. His heavy eyes showed that he had been faithful to his trust and lain sleepless all night.

"Ah, yes. I was forgetting. A visitor dropped in last night—a *Jivero* who seemed to have come far. I honored my guest by allowing him to rest with the wizard, and set this man to hear anything which might be said between them. Probably it is not worth listening to, but I shall hear it now."

He beckoned to Hatun.

"M-hm. Well, I'm going to wash my frowsty face. If there's any new scandal in *Jivero* society, let me in on it when I get back. Coming, Rod?"

He strode away toward the creek, McKay following. Hatun entered, reported that the pair of prisoners had talked in the night, and proceeded to give an unemotional

résumé of their conversation. Tim and Nuné presently lounged out. José stood lazily smoking and patiently listening.

The night-walker, it seemed, had come from a *Jivero* settlement some days distant at the southwest. It had been raided by Huambizas, and, so far as the youth knew, he was the only male of his tribe to escape. He had been wounded in the leg, but managed to evade pursuers by swimming a creek and climbing a tree, where he remained concealed until the raiders were gone. With great difficulty he had come to this place to attach himself to the *Yana Yacu* tribe. Arriving at night, he had intended to wait outside the chief's house until morning, but found himself caught by the dreaded White Ones of the East.

Having thus made clear his reason for coming, the youth had then asked the wizard how it came that the White Ones held the place, and had received a fairly truthful answer. Then the wizard, anxious to save his face before even this wretched representative of his nation, had explained his own captivity by declaring that his magic had made the enemy unable to kill him, and that now he remained only because he was thinking a spell on the White Ones, by which they would presently be destroyed.

Hatun paused. José, who had heard with languid interest, nodded and half-turned away. But Hatun had not yet done; there had been more talk, in which the wizard had extracted from the newcomer all possible information about the Huambiza raid; and this the sleepy spy now recited. As he went on, his king began to grow tense.

He swung back to face the narrator. His eyes burned into those of Hatun. The half-smoked bark roll dropped from his fingers. When the tale ended he stood breathing hard and poised as if about to spring.

"*Dios mío!*" he muttered. "That cursed bird of the night spoke truth! *Alma perdida?* We are all lost souls if—"

Outside sounded the approaching feet of his partners returning from the creek. Knowlton laughed at some jest, and Tim's unmusical voice broke out in a ditty:

"The Sixty-Ninth went over the top,
Pa-a-arley-wool
The Sixty-Ninth went over the top,
Pa-a-arley-wool
The Sixty—"

"Huh! Whazzamatter, Hozy? Got a cramp or somethin'?"

They were entering. José turned to them a face startling in its gray pallor.

"Sî—I have worse than that!" he rasped through his teeth. "Listen! Days ago the Huambizas attacked a Jivero place—killed all its men—left the women behind—came east! One boy escaped. He says the Huambiza force was the greatest ever seen. It is led by a black-bearded savage who seems a white man and who fights like a *demonio*. He and his head-hunters are killing all men. They command the women to await their return or be killed whenever caught elsewhere. And they are striking toward my own country. Sî, they may be already in it!

"While we have been on this Yana Yacu that force has passed us somewhere in the forest. While we have sought a way to reach David Rand and save him, David Rand sweeps down on my helpless ones with an army of the fiercest murderers in the world! —! May his body rot apart while still he lives! May his soul burn forever!"

His strident voice rose to a yell, and his wan face blackened with passion.

"Cripes!" breathed Tim. "Dave—ol' good-feller Dave—goin' on the war-path ag'inst Hozy's women and kids! 'Tain't possible!"

McKay stepped forward, lifted his ammunition-belt from his couch, and buckled it on.

"I take it that we'll be moving," was his dry comment.

"Sî! We move now! We move east!"

Striking the quiet Hatun aside, José shot through the doorway. And as Knowlton and Tim slid into their harnesses and grabbed their rifles, the voice of the King of the White Ones tore across the clearing like the scream of a maddened puma.

"Aillu! Curac!"

CHAPTER XX

RETREAT

ONCE more the village of the Jiveros was under control of its own people. The devastating storm of lead and steel which yesterday had overwhelmed it now had swept away, leaving behind it a brooding silence and a vast emptiness.

Not that it was actually empty. Among its huts moved human figures, passing to and fro and round about; but they moved in a lost, aimless fashion, as if dazed and unseeing. They were the women of the place, freed for the first time in their lives from male dominance, and utterly at a loss as to what to do with their sudden liberty. Of all the men who on the previous morning had been their mates and masters only one remained—the wizard. And he was no longer the master of any one—even of himself.

His impotence was due directly to the fact that Curac and Aillu were gentlemen of fixed ideas and ruthless efficiency. On receiving their king's urgent orders to embark their men instantly for a return eastward, they had paused long enough to inquire—

"Do we take with us the Jivero men?"

To which José, seething with rage and hate, had snapped—

"To the — with them!"

It pleased those implacable warriors to interpret this as a command and to put it forthwith into execution. So the wizard and the refugee now lay side by side in the house where they had spent the night, gazing sightlessly at the roof and speaking not at all.

So far as the wounded youth was concerned, the sudden drop into oblivion undoubtedly was a stroke of mercy. His untended injury was so gangrenous that not even the wizard could have saved him. And as for the wizard himself, the only good Jivero wizard is a dead wizard.

To this lifeless pair of men the women drifted in groups, standing and staring in dull apathy. Then they drifted away, to congregate at the pile of ashes into which all the rest of the men had vanished, and under which the deep-buried head of their last victim still grinned in the fire-baked clay. Whenever some woman should take the initiative, the wizard and his companion would be carried into the forest and left to the mercies of the tiger-footed Chaquicuna, and thus would disappear the last fighter of the tribe. Soon their bones would be obliterated by the jungle débris as permanently as the last relic of Montez had been swallowed up by the earth. And when the winds and the rains should disintegrate the ash-heap, no marker would be left to show where Montez lay. There had been no

time to erect his memorial cross. When every energy is needed for the benefit of the living, the dead must shift for themselves.

Beyond the palisade remained no trace of the conquerors except trampled tracks. No canoes, of either Sumatara or Jivero make, lay at the shore. On the gloomy creek itself not even a ripple told of the coming and going of the army. Its mouth was empty, and the Yana Yacu above it was empty. Below it, a narrow, wet margin above the water-line on both shores was all that told of the passage of a hurrying host whose keels and paddles had hurled the water to either side. Already that rushing flotilla was well down-stream, swooping around curve after curve and dashing toward the Pastasa as if pursued by all the demons of all the jungles of the world.

They sped in the same formation as before; Curac in the lead, followed closely by the king and McKay and the girl, trailed hard by the paddlers of Knowlton and Tim. Curac now was not scouting; he was plying a mighty paddle and setting the pace, goaded now and then by a harsh bark from José. No precautions were taken against the chance that some enemy might have stolen into the Yana Yacu behind them. If such should be the case, the flying column would ram head-on into the foe, smash it with furious attack, and dash on. The human water-snake now was mad for speed.

And yet, their king had not told them why they should drive at such a pace. He had not even hinted at the reason why they were taking the back-track. His only commands to Curac and Aillu had been to rush for the Pastasa. But, in that mysterious way in which knowledge creeps through a fighting force, the men had grasped the truth. Perhaps Hatun had talked. Perhaps these warriors, who never before had seen their ruler retreat, instinctively felt that a black danger was sweeping into their own land. At any rate, they knew well enough that their enemy now was not in the west but in the east, and that they must break paddles, backs and hearts to reach and attack the menace.

Except for his occasional nags at Curac, José kept his mouth shut hard. His face was flint, his eyes hot coals burning behind slitted lids, his hands a pair of talons gripping his rifle as if throttling an assailant. McKay, expressionless as a wooden idol,

sat immobile, figuring on the time of their journey. To reach the Jivero settlement had taken nearly six days of steady going, four of which had been down-hill land marching and down-stream water travel. Now they must buck the Pastasa current which had aided them, climb the trails which had sloped easily downward before them; they would do well if they reached the stronghold again in a week and a half. So he calculated, and so his partners in the following boat also figured. And where were the Huambizas now? Ahead or behind? The leering phantom of War alone knew, and he was not telling.

Meanwhile Nuné rode in amazed perplexity. She had no key to the riddle of this sudden frenzied retreat. She had not returned to the house at the same moment as Tim and the others; else she might have caught a clue from the word, "Huambizas." So she knew only that some tremendous thing had come about, and that she was being borne fast away from the western land which she had hoped to reach. The only solution that occurred to her—and this seemed most unlikely—was that these White Ones had been stricken with sudden fear and dared not go nearer to her people.

Noon passed without a slackening of speed. The paddlers were working at too high a pressure to be aware of hunger. Their faces were masks, their bodies machines, their stout hearts dynamos driving them with ceaseless power. McKay, who had thought of suggesting to José a brief halt to let the men eat and renew their strength, changed his mind. Their endurance showed no sign of slackening, and until it should do so there would be little sense in pausing. So they surged on, and on, and on.

Sundown drew near. In the minds of the idle Americans, who had lunched on tubes of monkey-extract while the boats hurtled onward, grew astonishment at the toughness of the Sumataras. Those warriors had not eaten breakfast or lunch; had not paused an instant from that killing stroke. Looking back, the observers noted that mouths were open, teeth grinning fixedly, jaws hanging rigid—sure indications of exhaustion and approaching collapse. Yet the machine-like drive of the arms and shoulders continued unbroken.

"José!" snapped McKay. "You're killing them! Let up!"

"Soon," acknowledged José without turning his head.

A few minutes later they shot out of the Yana Yacu and were in the Pastasa.

José barked once more at Curac. A hoarse grunt floated back. The prow of the pilot-boat turned slightly down-stream, heading toward a sandspit on the farther side. The body of the water-snake followed its head, crawling steadily out of the creek in a long line. Pushed by the current, it drifted downward while it crossed the river, and curved into shore below the point. Canoe after canoe berthed snugly beside its predecessor, forming a row of river-beasts resting side by side, noses on the sand. And as each grounded and abruptly stopped, its men simultaneously bowed—and stayed bowed; their glazed eyes staring blindly at the bottoms of their craft, their lungs heaving like those of creatures utterly spent, their muscles powerless to lift them erect.



THE four white men leaped out, guns ready, eyes searching the sand for foot-prints and the trees for lurking foes. The only tracks were those of birds and beasts; the only movement in the bush, that of hastily departing monkeys. But the patrol scouted along the whole length of the beach before it relaxed and came back at a more leisurely gait. Meanwhile the Indians had caught their wind and thrown water on their heads, and now they were stiffly emerging from the canoes.

With one accord they flocked to the open beach beyond the boats and bathed. Returning refreshed, they walked with heads up and backs straight, as if ready to resume their grueling race at once. But this was only pride and Indian bravado. The famished speed with which they bolted their meat and *masata*, and their sluggishness afterward, proved that their vital forces were burned low.

The whites fared like the rest, no fires being built—indeed, there was nothing to cook. They ate paste, drank river-water, and were done with it. José was broodingly taciturn, smiling faintly only once. That was when he intercepted a glance by Nuné at Tim.

"If she should ask you to walk with her, friend Tim," he suggested, "it would please me if you did not tell her that the Huam—that her people are near."

Tim nodded. And when the girl did walk away, with an inviting look at him, he followed readily enough; baffled her questions for a time; and then told her it was believed that some Jiveros were near the Pastasa. Which was true enough, but did not explain the mad dash to this point, where no sign of Jiveros showed.

The sky was clear, and the Indians scented a dry night. No shelters were built. At the coming of the dark, the White Ones stretched on the sand, loosely holding their weapons, and slept like the dead. And now the four who had sat idle during the day took on the burden of the night watch. José and McKay, silent and alert, patrolled up and down in the gloom until the moon rose, then took fixed posts at either end of the line. Knowlton and Tim were aroused about midnight and watched until day-break. Unbroken peace ruled throughout the night. Not even a wandering jaguar came near the fireless bivouac. But King José had the assurance that his faithful men were protected as they deserved.

At the first streak of dawn and the first note of the morning chorus, the White Ones sprang awake. Before the sun had fairly hit the western bank their dugouts were swinging out around the point and heading up-stream. Cruising near shore, where the current was weakest, they crawled doggedly upward until the fierce heat of afternoon was upon them. Then Curac wagged a signaling hand toward the bank, and his prow turned in that direction. His paddlers, reaching the shore, arose and swung machetes against obstructing bush. Into a gloomy canal the boat worked its way. As always, the others followed in file.

The new watercourse was tortuous and snaggy, but short. Presently it widened out and became a long lagoon, dotted with muddy islets densely overgrown, and rank with water-plants; a slimy, dismal place, fetid and swarming with mosquitoes. But open channels and lack of currents allowed a fairly direct route and fast time, and the column drove inland at high speed.

Suddenly, as the boat of Curac swept close to the reedy shore of an islet, a hideous form shot from nowhere and struck the canoe. With a strangled yell its men were hurled overboard. The dugout rolled over and over, caught in a huge scaly coil. Then, before the paralyzed men in the canoe behind it could lift guns, the boat and the

coil together disappeared in a smother of foam. A moment later the canoe arose and floated sluggishly, its sides splintered as if scraped by a gigantic rasp.

The monster which had struck it was gone. So was one of the crew.

Curac and the six remaining paddlers swam desperately to the nearest canoes and were hauled in. Other boats cruised about in a flurry, men jabbing lances into the mucky bottom or seeking signs of the vanished victim. Nothing was found.

The empty canoe, though cracked and water-logged, was still serviceable. So it was bailed out with gourds, the paddles and such weapons as floated were recovered, and its crew reentered it. Their guns, of course, were lost forever. Soon the line was speeding forward again.

"It seems," said Nuné composedly, "that Yacumama now does not favor the White Ones."

José glared and spat curses on Yacumama and every other heathen god. The girl looked calmly over his head.

Late in the day, the brigade plowed to a stop at the base of a steep hill covered with heavy timber. Ever since leaving the river, the course had led generally northeast. José was obviously taking a short-cut toward his stronghold, and this was the end of the water travel. The shore where they landed was gravelly and firm, and, though no path was visible, the ground above would offer passable going, since undergrowth would be scant.

With a squint at the westering sun, José gave the order to march forthwith. The canoes were hastily tied to whatever came handy, and up the slope clambered the scouts and pathmakers, machetes ready for action against all obstacles. With the unerring instinct of their breed, they swung rapidly along through the pathless wilderness above, dexterously laying down a trail for the column to follow. An hour later all were well inland, on high ground, away from the insect plague which had haunted the lagoon. There camp was made.

"Tomorrow," said José, "we shall come into one of our forest paths. In another day we shall reach my home camp. *Madre de Dios!* How long are these days!"

The three nodded, knowing what was gnawing at his heart.

"Any watch tonight?" asked Knowlton, stifling a yawn.

"None. If our enemies are in this land they are following some path, and no path is near this spot. Sleep early and long, *amigos*; you will need all your strength tomorrow."

The promise proved to be no jest. When the long file broke out into a faint, narrow path the next forenoon it struck into a swift swing which taxed the legs and lungs of the Northerners to the utmost; a gruelling stride which was not quite a lope, but which bored up into the hills at a terrific pace. When noon came and José called a halt, Tim welcomed the cessation with a groan of relief. The others, though they swallowed the groans, were as thankful as he.

"Any of your log drums along here, José?" asked McKay, when his breathing had become normal. "Been listening for one."

"Not here, but farther on." The Spaniard cast a look ahead, showing a slightly worried expression. "This is a hunters' track. But it joins one of the better paths, and at that place is a *tunday*. I do not know how far ahead my first scout is now—"

A rapid, faint pad of feet interrupted him. From the path beyond them loped a runner. Before he had reached the side of José he was jerking out a brief but ominous report.

José half rose from his squat, then slowly sank back. For a moment he stared at his comrades, his jaw-muscles bunching with the strain of hard-set teeth. Quietly then he said:

"The scouts have reached the *tunday*. There they expected to find three signalers. Instead, they found the bones of three men—without skulls. And there are tracks of many savages who have gone up into the hills."

CHAPTER XXI

TWO CHIEFTAINS FALL

THROUGH the jungle, on the last lap of the long race with their fiercest foes, the war-dogs of the son of the Conquistadores tore like a great pack of voiceless wolves.

Before their speeding feet ran the plain track of the Huambiza horde, and before their minds hung the dread vision of their women and children helpless in the power of those killers from the west. Behind them—far behind now—lay their food-packs, their paddles, their hammocks, everything except their weapons and one

small meat-tube apiece; for all impedimenta had been abandoned for the final dash up into the hills. Behind them also, doggedly plodding onward but hopelessly distanced by the raging warriors, came the three North Americans and Nuné. McKay, keeping his head when battle-fury swept the entire White Indian force into mad speed, had refused to allow the desertion of his own and his mates' equipment—which consisted mainly of cartridges; and Nuné, unasked and unasking, remained with them. José was dashing ahead with his men.

"Let 'em run," was McKay's dictum. "We'll hold our own gait and finish fresh."

"Right," seconded Knowlton. "And when we finish we'll do what we came here for—get hold of Dave if we can. That comes first, and smearing the Huambizas runs second."

"Humph!" grunted Tim. "Ye got things hind-end-to, I'm thinkin'. 'Twill take some good stiff gun-work to pry Dave loose from his gang. Hope we do git a li'l' action, anyways. If Hozy mops up before we git there—"

"Don't worry," McKay smiled, tight-lipped. "There'll be something doing."

No more was said. Hunching forward under their burdens, glancing to right and left with habitual vigilance now that they were alone, they marched steadily along the mucky road beaten plain by the hosts ahead. And the girl, nude and lithe, trailed them with tireless tread and with never a word.

At length McKay paused, an uplifted hand commanding attention. From somewhere to the left front, felt rather than heard, came a series of vague thudding impacts which quickened into a rapid roll; the air-shocks of increasing rifle-fire whose blunt explosions were deadened by the intervening jungle. Vague though it was, that ragged rhythm beat on the senses of the veterans like the nerve-thrilling rattle and boom of an old-time drum-corps.

"Cripes! They're at it!" erupted Tim. "Le's go!"

And they went. McKay, who had ordered restraint, now broke his own command and plunged forward at double time, the others hard at his heels. Yet the pace set by the captain was not the heart-straining top-speed at which the White Ones had coursed along; it was a distance-eating stride which still left something in reserve.

As they advanced, the noise of battle grew more heavy and unmistakable; the air-blows became thumps blending into a low thunder. At length, as the Northerners scrambled up a steep slope among rocks, the roar of conflict seemed to burst upon them as if a door had swung open. They had reached the mouth of the cañon through the cliffs. The fighting was inside the mountain bowl, and its tumult was muffled by its inner slopes, except here in the rocky rift of egress. In a few more paces it became deafening, the echoes of shots and yells reverberating between the walls with stunning force.

Half-way through, McKay checked. The way was blocked by a chaos of boulders hurled from above by the guardians of the gateway. A taint in the air told that beneath those stones lay crushed Huambizas; told, too, that the dead had not lain there many hours—else the reek would have been unbearable. Now there was no sign of the warders at the top, nor of any other living thing along the cleft. Evidently the head-hunters had, like a horde of army ants, hurled themselves forward over the bodies of their slain fellows in an irresistible stream; and the first ones to get through had swarmed up the inner slope and finished the guards.

For a moment the four paused in that slaughter-pen to catch the breath lost in the last climb. Then, as the men of José had done before them, they worked their way upward, pulling themselves over the rubble and forging on toward the fight. All the way to the inner end they found blood-stained stones, but not in such heaps as at the first barrier. It was apparent that the guards, too few to cope with so large a force of raiders, had held the invaders at first, but then had leaped along the brink in a frenzied, futile struggle to keep crushing the head of the column.

Here and there, as they progressed among the more thinly scattered blocks, they saw dead Huambizas lying as they had fallen under the smashing missiles. At each they glanced keenly, speaking no word. They were seeking, though dreading, a glimpse of the body of their quondam partner, David Rand. They found no sign of him.

Then they were through. Nowhere had they spied a dead White One or a live Huambiza. Now they saw at one glance, where the surviving Huambizas were—at

the central acropolis on which were clustered the royal houses of José. Intervening tree-tops blocked all view of the fight raging there, but at that point rose a haze of blue smoke, and from there rolled the infernal noise of combat. The head-hunters had penetrated to the heart of José's kingdom. Whether they had yet captured it was not clear.

McKay flung a quick look up and down; nodded, and strode down the path. A couple of rods below, he turned abruptly aside into a branch trail which angled upward again. It was the route usually followed by the guards in climbing to their posts of vigil. Up this surged the captain and his comrades, to halt at the top of the cliffs. There, where the watchers of the cañon had made their last stand, lay their jumbled bones, headless and picked bare by vultures. But the newcomers bestowed only a fleeting glance on this grim débris of the Huambiza foray. Their eyes went ranging out across the gulf to the focal point of the present mêlée.

As if to aid them, a gusty breeze went swooping across the bowl, shoving the smoke-haze aside and giving the observers a clear glimpse of the central rock. Its top was alive with tiny active figures, fighting against enemies down below. But whether those enemies were Huambizas or Sumataras—whether the White Ones still held their eyrie or the head-hunters had scaled it and were now holding off the avenging force of José—could not be told at this distance. The one thing certain was that much gun-fighting was going on in the enshrouding forest at its base.

"Looks to me as if the Huambizas were still down below," judged McKay, "and José had caught them from behind. If he can herd them between his men and the rock and keep them there, he's got them. Otherwise it'll be a long fight. Well, let's go."

With a final look to their guns and a loosening of pistols and machetes, they started downward at a plunging lope. After them, forgotten, still trailed Nuné—but not the same Nuné who had gone up the path. Once more she had donned her robe, and in her right hand was gripped the gold cross of the mad *Padre*. At last she had caught the name "Huambizas," which made the furious haste of the past few days suddenly clear to her. As suddenly, the jungle nymph had been transformed into the

priestess of Paitzo, and she now was going into battle as coolly as the veteran fighters whom she followed.

In long leaps the Northerners descended the zigzag track, outdistancing the girl. On the lower level they ran ahead without caution, following the path by which they had first come in, until they passed the stockade wherein the Jivero women had been confined. The trampled condition of that path showed that both the invaders and the pursuers had traveled it before them; and the absence of dead or wounded men proved that the Huambizas had all been concentrated at the central rock when the Sumatara warriors arrived. In their eagerness to storm that stronghold and their ignorance of the fact that their foes were behind and not before them, the savages from the Morona had neglected all precautions against attack from the rear.

Now the gun-fire was dying out and the fiendish yelling of the combatants came more clearly. Either the ammunition was running low or the opponents had come to the stabbing, throttling, rending hand-to-hand stage of the fight. At the entrance to a by-path McKay halted again, and the three listened to the uproar beyond, gauging the strength of the battle by its noise. The worst of it seemed to be just ahead.

"Rod!" yelled Knowlton, flashing a glance along the by-path. "Down here! Take 'em on the flank! This path curves around—remember it? Brings us out among rocks under the cliff—good cover."

The tall Scot nodded and his lips moved, but his words were lost. The nod was enough. The blond man and the red one double-timed down the narrow way, McKay following.

As Knowlton said, the detour led around to the base of the beleaguered mesa, crossing the cleared space and then entering a rubble of boulders. Along its course were several habitations, all of which now were deserted, so far as the three runners could observe. It was not until they had reached the clearing that they sighted any life. Then they found both life and death in plenty.



THE space immediately before them, between trees and stones, was empty. But only a few rods farther away, at the left, was the edge of a seething maelstrom of battle. Whatever formations might have been held at first—if, indeed, there had ever

been any—were now broken into a weltering chaos of individuals fighting with the ferocity of a blood-hatred centuries' old; a howling, hurtling, heaving mass without cohesion or sense, madly slaughtering itself. Down on it rained stones and other missiles hurled from the precipitous plateau towering above. From it rolled a reek of powder-smoke and fresh blood. Rifle-shots thumped, arrows flew, machetes and spear-heads glinted redly under the westering sun, close-locked antagonists wrestled and tore and fell and were trampled into the crimson soil. How far along the curving wall that homicidal conflict extended, and how the fight was going, the three men crouching at the edge of the trees could not discern.

"Aw——!" boomed Tim. "We can't do nothin'! If we open fire we'll likely kill some o' Hozy's gang—can't tell who's which in that mess! What's the word, cap? Tear into 'em or set tight?"

"Hold your fire."

McKay and Knowlton scanned the cliff. The portion facing them was blank, the shelf forming the only ascent being farther to the left, above the fighting horde. The jumble of big boulders across the clearing, against the precipice, would make almost invulnerable cover and enable them to crawl into a commanding position.

"All right," decided McKay. "Rush those rocks!"

They broke cover and rushed. For all the attention they received, they might as well have walked. The mind of every warring Indian was concentrated on his hereditary foes, and the arrival of a puny handful of white men meant less than nothing even if seen. So the three reached the rocks unnoticed, vanished among them, and, finding a faint path leading upward, worked rapidly higher and nearer to the center of conflict.

Soon they were well above the horde and peering down from a small cañon between jagged blocks of stone. Viewed from this point of vantage, the confusion was a trifle less bewildering. Though the tide of battle constantly ebbed and flowed, it became evident that a force of brown-skinned, long-haired warriors fought with their backs to the cliff, facing a seething mob of men much lighter of hue and shorter of hair. In the main, the Huambizas were quite well bunched, while the attacking White Ones were eddying back and forth, being hurled

back time and again but ever boring in with undiminished fury.

"By cripes, them Warm Beezers ain't collectin' no heads from Hozy yet!" bellowed Tim. "Got all they can do to hang on to their own. See Hozy or Dave anywheres? I can't make out nothin' but Injuns."

A long, keen gaze at the writhing mass ended in head-shakes. In that welter no individual could be distinguished. But McKay saw something else which held him quiet a moment, then decided him as to the tactics of his three-man attack.

"Look over yonder!" he yelled. "That point of rocks! White Ones are trying to cut through and roll up the Huambiza flank. Fire into the Huambizas there!"

"That's the dope," approved Knowlton.

He swung his pack to a niche where he could readily draw on his reserve ammunition. McKay and Tim did likewise. A moment later they were lying prone on a hot slab and aligning their sights on the brown men at the point designated by McKay.

Firing at will, with the rapid precision of trained shots, they dropped head-hunters in swift succession. The Huambizas opposing the Sumatara wedge began to crumple up, and the White Ones bored deeper. Reloading from their web belts, the sharpshooters poured another blast of concentrated fire into the same spot, and a veritable path opened before the light-skinned battlers. They surged into it with the speed of flood-waters sweeping into a newly breached channel. Before the divided mass of head-hunters could close and crush them, the deadly gun-fire from above was widening the gap, and more exultant Sumataras were pouring in, penetrating farther cliffward by their own vindictive prowess. When the belts of the Americans were empty, a lance-like lane of White Ones had pierced deep into the Huambiza horde, and the left flank of the savages was virtually surrounded.

Arrows began to rattle on the stones near by. A slug fired from some ancient gun flattened itself against a boulder, a yard to one side. The nearest Huambizas had at last located the spot whence poured the devastating, smokeless rifle-fire, and were sending up a few desperate shots to silence it. Tim leaned out, shook a fist, thumbed his nose, and hastily withdrew, just in time to dodge an accurately driven arrow. Chuckling, he crawled back to his pack and began digging up fresh cartridges.

Knowlton and McKay also drew back a little, laying down their hot weapons and resting their eyes, which ached from the strain of squinting against the slanting sun. Tim, after dumping his flat boxes of .30's from his haversack, took time to unstrap those of his companions for the next need. So several minutes passed before the three slid forward again with full guns and open cartridge-cases. And then they did not resume firing.

In those few minutes much had taken place. The White Ones had made good their thrust into the lane opened by the white men's guns and were fighting like fiends. The Huambiza left flank, battling three ways, was writhing like a nest of snakes, squirming about within itself in abortive advances and retreats. Now a wedge seemed to be forming at the farther side and driving toward the rocks where the Americans lurked. Rapidly it gathered strength and came on with increasing speed—a spear-head of Huambiza warriors, thrusting through the tangled ranks of their own fellows. As it came on, the hidden gunmen voiced sudden ejaculations. In that driving wedge they had glimpsed a white man's face, black-bearded and black-haired.

"Dave!" barked McKay.

"Dave!" echoed Knowlton. "It's old Dave!"

"Yeah! By —, it's him!" vowed Tim. "Him and his hellions, comin' right to us—nope, they're headin' for the end over yonder. Cripes! They got a guy there—draggin' him out o' the mess—looks like another white man! Yee-ay, Dave! Look up here! Da-a-ave!"

His yell went unheard. The white man plunged on with his savage satellites, dragging the form which Tim had spied. They shoved other Huambizas aside with ruthless roughness, intent on their own purpose.

"Get down the path!" snapped McKay. "We'll grab him— Hold on! Wait!"

The flying wedge had deflected toward them. It crushed its way through to the rocks. Not more than fifty feet from McKay and Knowlton and Tim, and in plain sight, it stopped among boulders. Yet none of the grisly warriors looked up at the Americans, or seemed aware of their existence.

The white commander of the head-hunters—muscular, streaked with dirt and sweat and blood, ferocious as any of his

savage allies—turned to his men with a harsh grunt. The pair following him loosed their holds on the limp form they had been hauling through the press. It fell, rolled over on a slanting stone, and lay motionless, face upward.

Bleeding from several wounds, senseless and perhaps lifeless, José Martínez, King of the White Ones, lay there in the power of David Rand, leader of the Huambizas.

Rand spoke, his rough voice carrying to the tense watchers above!

"Wake up, you — swine! Look alive and talk!"

With the words he kicked the prostrate man with a leathery bare heel. José made no answer. He could make none.

"Talk, you rotter! Tell what you did with—"

"Rana!"

The clear call broke from the boulders above him. Out from those rocks, leaping downward with agile grace, came Nuné. Huambiza faces lifted, heavy Huambiza jaws dropped, blood-shot Huambiza eyes stared at the slim figure descending with gold cross blazing in the sun. Rand whirled and stood as if petrified. A few seconds more, and the girl stood before him, flushing, laughing happily, searching his fierce visage for the welcoming smile of which she had dreamed for weary weeks. Amid the hideous barbarity of jungle war, the priestess of Piatzo had at last returned to the man she loved.

And then McKay, expert rifleman in the United States Army and dead shot in any part of the world, slid his rifle forward. Coolly he drew a bead on his old-time partner. The gunshot cracked wickedly among the rocks.

Rand fell as if smitten by a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER XXII

AT BAY

"COME on! Get 'em!" rasped McKay. While his astounded comrades stared at him, he sprang up, leaped back to the path, and bounded down it. Automatically they jumped up and dashed after him. Almost together, the three swerved sharp to the right, leaped from rock to rock, and burst into view of the gaping Huambizas. Only a few feet below them, Rand lay across the body of José.

"Tim! Hold 'em!" snapped the captain, passing his pistol to the Irishman. "Come on, Merry! Make it fast!"

Tim, gripping the proffered side-arm, grunted comprehension and drew his own. Dropping his rifle, McKay yanked his machete free and sprang down, landing within arm's length of the head-hunters and close beside the unconscious white rivals. The instant his feet struck he swung the blade sidewise, slashing Huambiza throats.

The impact of Knowlton's feet sounded beside him, followed by the ripping roar of the lieutenant's .45. Huambiza faces, contorted with rage, went blank and fell backward, cascading blood from holes in their foreheads. Other head-hunters staggered and collapsed, clutching at jugulars severed by the Scot's flying blade. So daring and deadly was the suicidal attack of the white men that no retaliating thrusts reached them; indeed, the savages gave back in momentary panic, dodging the red steel and the thundering hand-gun.

"Now! Grab and go!" barked McKay, his iron face unchanging. "Tim! Snap into it!"

With the words he dived at Rand; heaved the limp body up on his shoulders, and turned to climb. Knowlton seized José. Above, Tim went into action with both pistols to cover their retreat, crashing bullets into head-hunters who surged forward the instant the pair stooped.

Then Nuné sprang. Stunned for the moment by the fall of Rand, she now flashed into violent assault on the man who had downed him. Screaming, she leaped like a tigress upon McKay, clawing, tearing, yanking at him in blind fury.

The captain, struggling up a rock, staggered under her weight and nearly toppled backward. Knowlton, just behind and carrying José like a sack of flour, lunged ahead and butted the tottering man in the back, restoring his balance. McKay half-turned, dropped his machete, shot his right arm around the crazed girl's neck, wrenched her off her feet, and clamped her head against his side. Then, still carrying Rand on his broad shoulders and dragging the girl in chancery, he fought his way on upward.

"Make it—" *bang!* "—snappy, cap!" implored Tim, between shots. "Tm—" *bang!* "—most shot out!" *Bang-bang!*

Horrible yells behind the ascending pair

emphasized the urgency. A thrown spear clattered on the rock beside Knowlton.

Gasping with the strain, slipping and lurching on the stones, McKay clambered with desperate speed and incredible strength. Knowlton bumped him again and again, helping him on. Tim, crouching, with eyes blazing and weapons flaming, made every bullet score. His last shot crashed out as the burdened pair lunged past him into better footing.

"I'll hold 'em!" he gritted. "Keep goin'!"

Jamming the empty pistols under his belt, he sank on one knee and seized his rifle. The sharp crack of the .30 and the clatter of the breech-bolt replaced the barking of the .45's. The foremost of the Huambizas, starting a rush the instant they saw the red man drop, sprawled, writhed, and stayed down. With spears grating ominously on the rocks around him, with demoniacal visages swarming below him, he squatted and shot as accurately as if engaged only in rapid-fire target-work on some safe rifle-range at home. When his own rifle was empty he snatched up Knowlton's and hammered away with hardly a break.

Behind him, the others, protected now by the rocks from flying missiles, staggered into the crooked path and drove their quivering legs to a pounding run. Nuné, her struggles weakening, was dragged bumping along in the remorseless arm-grip of McKay. When her captor loosed his hold—in the covert where lay the packs—she fell limp and less than half-conscious, dizzied and dazed. Beside her dropped the body of her Rana, released none too gently by the captain, who then reeled against a boulder and drooped like a spent horse.

"Load—pistol," he panted. "Get—guns. Tim—"

He gestured weakly outward, gasping and half-blinded by sweat.

Knowlton, breathing hard himself, made no reply. He fumbled a fresh clip into his pistol-butt, glanced once at the bloody-headed Rand, and turned back to the path. He had no more than reached it when Tim plunged into sight, running hard and carrying all three rifles.

"Git shells, looey!" yelled Tim. "Shot out! Them hellions'll come over the top now—"

"Got you," cut in the blond man, holding up the ready pistol. "Hustle up!"

As the lone rear-guard reached him, Knowlton plucked one of the empty pistols from his belt and replaced its spent clip with a fresh one. Tim pounded onward with the rifles. Less than half a minute passed before his prediction proved true. Fierce faces and brown bodies sprang into sight at the bend of the path. The vengeful "hellions" were coming.

But, amid that maze of cliff-blocks, not many could come at once, and the bulk of the Huambiza force was not even trying to come—it was fighting for existence against the beleaguering Sumataras. Knowlton's twin pistols flamed, and the leaders went down, one heaving a javelin even as he fell. A twist to one side barely saved the lieutenant, the poisoned head of the missile ripping the slack of his shirt at the waistline. Shooting as he went, he retreated backward along the path, holding off the attackers in front and evading any who might have tried to flank him among the stones. By the time he was at the entrance to their rock-bound sharp-shooting post, McKay and Tim were ready with full guns.

With grim persistence, but with savage stealth and cunning, the head-hunters who had determined to exterminate the white men came on. They crept now among the rocks, abandoning the path where half a score of their fellows had fallen under Knowlton's fire. McKay, scaling a slant boulder whence he could hastily estimate the situation, detected several brown figures slinking below. He promptly opened fire, swinging his gun from man to man as fast as possible, and downing three. The others flattened behind cover. Beyond other rocks, other heads bobbed up, sinking again as the rifle swung in their direction. The captain guessed that at least a score of implacable foes were crawling up to them.

"Back to the edge!" he commanded, sliding down. "Best place. Covers us on two sides—open end's too steep to be climbed—got to watch the rear and overhead. Move out!"

Watchful, tense, he stood on guard while the other two moved their packs, the rival commanders, and the reviving Nuné to the extreme outer end of their narrow alley. As they lifted Rand, Tim took a keen look at the crimsoned head and grinned.

"Creased as neat as a new pair o' pants," he rejoiced. "Dave ain't hurt bad—only knocked cold. But my gosh, what shootin'!

If cap had wobbled his gun jest a hair—or Dave had moved jest then—'twould be, 'Good night, Davey'!"



TWO quick shots from McKay's rifle stopped talk and hastened work. But Knowlton, catching the smouldering gaze of Nuné, took time to say: "Rana lives. He only sleeps. We are still his friends."

Her tragic face lightened, and she drew a quick breath. But no gratitude was in the look she gave him. Had not these men once said that Rana must go away with them? Had they not just shot him down? Friends, indeed!

To the injuries of José they could give only a fleeting inspection, but none seemed fatal. Like Rand, he still was unconscious from a shock to the head—probably a club-blow. A nasty-looking hole under his left lower ribs might or might not be a mortal wound, and he was gashed in several places. In the present exigency he had to lie untended beside Rand in the shade of a boulder. Beside the pair, her back to the rock, Nuné squatted with an assumption of Indian stoicism. There was nothing she could do.

McKay's rifle cracked again. Then he came sidling in, seeing all in one quick survey.

"Watch overhead!" he commanded. "Both sides. I'll guard the rear."

"Path clear?" asked Knowlton.

"It is now," the captain replied with a grim smile. "May not be for long. Watch yourselves."

He faced about and crouched. Knowlton and Tim turned their eyes upward, awaiting the sudden appearance of savage heads on the crests of their flanking stones. If the head-hunters should come a few at a time they would have a fighting chance; but if they should come leaping down in a body it would be desperate work.

Time dragged. From below came the same ghastly chorus of hate and death, the same taint of freshly spilled blood. Near at hand nothing happened. Tim sneaked a look down at the *mêlée*, turning quickly back with a grin.

"Oh boy! Lookit the hash!" he exulted. "Looye, them tarriers o' Hozy's are moppin' up right! This here left flank is gittin' chopped into meat balls— Umph! Low bridge!"

His rifle licked upward and spat. A snarling shape which had sprung into sight above them collapsed, pitched forward, and flopped soggly down into the little cañon behind McKay. At the same moment the captain fired toward the path, and another brown form dropped on its face. Tim's ejected shell had hardly tinkled on the rocks when he shot again, and a third apparition vanished from the sky-line, sliding down outside. On Knowlton's side no heads appeared.

"Got us located," McKay warned. "Watch for a rush now."

Tense seconds snailed away. Though McKay still watched toward the path, all felt that the rush would come from above—a simultaneous rise, leap, and drop of savages with down-pointed spears, like infantry storming a trench with bayonets. With guns cocked and fingers on triggers, they awaited the shock of impact.

The seconds became minutes. Still no new assailant showed himself. Then above the riot from below sounded sudden sharp yells near at hand—raucous howls of defiance blending with screeches of hateful triumph. The waiting men braced themselves. But no Huambizas appeared.

Blows thudded faintly. Death-screams shrilled. Somewhere a rock grated, sliding under a weight. Then Knowlton's rifle darted to an aim at something above—and poised without firing.

A pair of struggling forms had risen on the right-hand boulder, grappling with murderous ferocity. They fell, kicking, biting, choking, rolling over and over toward the white men. In a sudden scrambling slide they shot headlong downward into the crevice, still tearing at each other. The head of one crunched on a stone, and he went limp. The other, his hold broken, clawed about him, then lurched to his feet, glaring dizzily around. He was a warrior of the White Ones. The one with the crushed skull was a Huambiza.

A crooked grin quirked over the lacerated face of the Sumatara. Hoarsely he panted, with a gesture including the surrounding boulders:

"We come. We kill."

As his meaning became plain, the ready rifles sank. One by one, other White Ones arose on either side, breathing hard and bearing fresh stains of fight; peered down at the whites, glanced around them, and came dropping in. The daring attack of the Northerners of the Huambizas and their retreat with prisoners, followed by vengeful head-hunters, had been seen by some of the White Ones below; and those witnesses had forthwith sped around to the path, ascended it, and scattered to hunt down the hated Westerners. Now the head-hunters were dead.

Down at the base of the rocks, too, the Huambizas were virtually annihilated. The isolated left flank was now shredded into an even worse hash than when Tim had last looked down—cut to pieces and being exterminated by swarming White Ones. Farther along the cliff, the remaining body of invaders was likewise broken up, though not so hopelessly trapped; scattered segments had managed to fight their way out and were fleeing in disorderly rout toward the rock-choked rift by which they had entered—the only exit they knew; others, hemmed in, were desperately seeking a line of escape and not finding it. The infuriated fighters of José had at last gained the upper hand and were utterly smashing their foe.

"Wal, I s'pose this ends our li'l party," growled Tim. "Somebody always has to come buttin' in jest when we're goin' good."

His long breath of relief, however, belied his sour tone.

McKay, turning with a slight smile, opened his mouth to retort, but shut it with a click of teeth. A simultaneous growl broke from the White Ones, a cry from Nuné, and a sharp command from Knowlton—

"Quit that, you fools!"

The eyes of José and Rand, lying face to face, had opened. Oblivious of all else, the two chiefs had glared at each other and then reached both hands for the throat. Now, without a sound, they were striving to choke each other to death.

TO BE CONCLUDED





Author of "The Cabin Window," "How It Worked," etc.

THE purple shadows were lengthening in the river valley. A pair of snow geese rose and flew upstream, leaving on the silver sheen of water a long V-wake that broadened until it touched the bank on each side. The snow-girthed peak of Blanc Toujours, around whose base the river coiled, was still yellow in the late sun. A small rainbow, "the eye of the buck," hung in a crescent over the mountain as a promise of another fair day of Indian Summer.

At the foot of Blanc Toujours a hundred yards up from the river stood three tall, slender hemlocks. A slide of white silt soil had buried the surrounding thickets of aspen and clumps of black balsam; but the sturdier hemlocks still reared up straight and lonely. The middle tree had been lopped of branches to a height of half a hundred feet, only an umbrella-like top remaining. A little over a man's reach from the ground a rough slab bearing a knifed inscription was spiked to the bole.

A few minutes after the snow geese had gone up-stream, they came winging swiftly back around a bend two hundred yards above the lob-stick; and disappeared down the river. A minute later a canoe swung into view. Its lines were the deep-forest, half-mysterious lines of the Indian birch-bark. Two men dipped paddles in practised, easy unison, one of them sitting in the front while the other knelt Indian-fashion in the stern. The canoe glided left across the

river, touched directly beneath the lob-stick; and the pair clambered up the slope to the three trees.

One of them was a white man of forty, tall, angular, and weathered. His manner was as deliberate as a mountain. The other was an Indian, a clean-cut warrior of thirty, muscular and soft-stepping. His features were slightly Mongoloid; his color a clear copper with undertone of red. He wore the head-dress and trouser trimmings of a sub-chief of the Bad People.

They ascended the slope until they were a few paces above the inscription slab, before they stopped, turned and gazed at it. The white man pointed a forefinger at the legend and addressed his companion.

"We stop here," he said in the language of the sub-chief. "This is what I brought you to see, Moose Nose."

"We go no farther?" asked the Indian, surprised.

"Our trails part here. You will go back to your warriors; I to the Fort."

The Indian looked long at the roughly cut symbols, his features set and expressionless. After he had glanced across the lettering from left to right and back again, he asked without a show of interest, almost in tone of disappointment:

"What does it say? This marks the death of what warrior of the whites? How can this, as you told me yesterday, mean life or death to me?"

"I will answer your questions in their

season, which will be before the sun leaves the top of Blanc Toujours," returned the white man. "Then the lettering will mean more to you."

He took the Indian by the arm and led him a dozen steps along the slope where, in the shelter of a huge hillside boulder, were a clump of the paunrat-berry and a rock cairn. They sat down facing each other across the mound.

"More than a year ago," the white man began slowly, "my brother, who was as young as you and a warrior I was proud to call blood-brother, left the fort on the big river. Two men had come in from the brush and whispered to him about the color of gold in the hills to the west. They had no money to buy rifles and food and things to dig with. Against my counsel my brother gave them money and came up the river with them. He told me he would be back before the big snows. He did not come."

"Men who dig in the streams forget home and promise," said the Indian.

"All Winter I waited," the white man went on. "Then in *upish pishio*—the Moon of the Leaf—I left my work and started up this river to search for my brother and his partners. I found their old camps and the holes they had dug in the gravel for yellow dust. But where the river forks three pipes down the stream, I lost their trail. Not even the eyes of Moose Nose can track a canoe on the water.

"During *opum pishio*—the Moon of Flight—I searched among the hills to the west. By chance, one evening I came suddenly across my brother's partners, living like musquash in a cave by a little creek. They are yonder now."

He raised his arm and pointed west toward a range of hills twenty miles away, where a blue V-cleft showed a river cutting through the range.

"And your brother?" asked the Indian.

"I looked for him, but he was not there. I asked men Galibois and Molony where they had left my brother. With tears in their eyes they told me he was dead."

Moose-Nose ejaculated "Ugh!" in surprise.

A look of sympathy, brief but sincere, flitted across his coppery features.

"I asked men Galibois and Molony how he died," continued the white man in steady tones. "They told me he had gone up a different river from theirs one day and they

found him drifting down on the water, dead in his canoe."

"How did they say your brother died?"

"By the hand of Moose Nose and his warriors, the Jumping Salmon."

With a startled yell of astonishment the sub-chief leaped to his feet. He grasped his rifle leaning against the mound, but as quickly threw it down again and flashed a copper knife from his belt.

"Thou art a liar!" he cried, quivering with anger. "Thou hast no rifle, but a knife. Fight!"

The white man did not make a motion to rise. He sat quiet, looking straight into the eyes of the Indian whose quick rage was paralyzed by the deliberate calmness of the other.

"Sit down," he commanded. "Sit down and wait till the arrow is drawn to the head. Did I say to you that I believed the tale of men Galibois and Molony? Did I say: 'Moose Nose, thou hast killed my brother, and I shall kill thee beside his grave?' No!"

The Indian gave a startled look at the mound, and as comprehension broke upon him he shrank back from the stones.

"Your brother sleeps here?" he burst out. "At our feet?"

The white man nodded.

"His spirit has passed and can do you no harm. Sit down while I finish. It will soon be dark and I have something yet to do.

"I did not take the word of men Galibois and Molony. I remembered that you had talked with my brother in the hills to the north and exchanged presents with him. Though they tried to hide it from me, I was quick to see that men Galibois and Molony were digging their fortunes out of the peagravel beneath their cave. They would say little about my brother's death until I loosened their tongues with conversation water. Then they told me that he was buried here."

The white man wetted his lips, and his features twitched, but he continued his even story:

"The Jumping Salmon have done many evil things, but I did not believe that Moose Nose would kill the brother of his friend. The eyes of men Galibois and Molony looked into the bushes when they told me that the Jumping Salmon had killed him. When I left the cave the next morning I threw my long rifle into the river, for the

sear-bolt had lost out during the night and the rifle was useless."

"How did it come that you left the cave?" asked the sub-chief.

The white man smiled grimly.

"In my talk I said twice that every one at the fort knew I had come up the river to search for my brother; and that every one knew the Jumping Salmon were my friends. *That* is why I left the cave. I did not go back to the fort, as I said to them I would; but circled and came here, and dug."

With instinctive feeling the Indian looked away until the white man had composed himself and spoke on—more rapidly and with vehemence.

"The bullet that struck my brother in the back was such a bullet as would fit the rifles of men Galibois and Molony. And it was notched, as no Jumping Salmon knows how. But still I was not sure. I did not take the word of the bullet. The Indians might have had such rifles. From here I went north across the mountains to my friends, the Fox-brush people. I asked them, 'Last year when the burnished Moon of Flight was waning, where were the Jumping Salmon, the warriors of Moose Nose?'"

"But first you came to our camp and spoke softly to many of us," interposed the sub-chief quickly.

"But I did not take your word," the white man replied evenly. "The Fox-brush people spoke without looking into the bushes. They told me that the Jumping Salmon had passed their camp at the beginning of the Moon of Flight; had speared caribou in the lakes north of the mountains; and had not returned till the Moon of Hoar Frost, when the caribou horns harden. So I knew that Moose Nose and his warriors were not guilty."

Relief, sharp and quick, spread over the countenance of the sub-chief. He flung his knife on the ground impetuously, as if in contrition for his hastiness in drawing it. The white man rose to his feet.

"And you came again to our camp, as a friend," the Indian prompted.

"As a friend," the white man echoed. "And to bring you here to the grave of my brother."

"But why?"

"We will read the lettering."

They stepped back to the lob-stick. The white man spelt out the words slowly, that

the sub-chief might understand the English.

"Pierce McLeon killed August 15, 1920, by the Jumping Salmon."

The sub-chief snorted in surprise, like a hit buck. His rage was wordless. He stood like a statue of wrath, his thin nostrils quivering. McLeon repeated the words.

"Liars!" Moose Nose hissed. "Liars in big letters, and murderers of their partner!"

They stood a moment in silence broken only by the flurried breathing of the Indian and the wildness note of a red-throated loon down the river.

"You are shrewd, Moose Nose," McLeon said at length. "Do you know why I visited your camp a second time, and brought you here with me?"

"How do I know the lettering is what you had said?" the Indian demanded.

"You can copy it on bark and show it to the first white man you meet," McLeon returned. "But that would be a great mistake for you to make. Word would get to the fort that the Jumping Salmon, according to the letters, killed my brother. You, Moose Nose, would be visited by the short carbines that ask no questions, but shoot straight. They know that the Jumping Salmon have not been guiltless in the past. They would not seek out the truth as I have done. They would not take the word of your whole tribe against the word of the slab and the words of men Galibois and Molony."

The sub-chief suddenly started to climb the lob-stick to pull down the slab, but McLeon stopped him.

"I will see to that," he promised. "But I have no rifle nor belt-gun. I can not stop the tongues of men Galibois and Molony, or I would already have done so. They are watching for me with rifles. When they dig out all the dust and go in to the fort, they will say that the Jumping Salmon killed their partner. Then you can expect a visit from the short carbines. Your squaw-woman and papooses will wonder who is going to feed them."

Emotions violent and uncontrollable swept over the Indian's face like choppy gusts across a lake. Anger crowded out the others as he continued to stare at the inscription slab. McLeon watched him keenly. When he saw the anger fade and the features of the sub-chief set in a grim intent, he judged it time to speak again.

"They will soon finish their work in the gravel and will get back to the fort before the Moon of Snow. Word of how the Jumping Salmon killed my brother must not get to the fort."

The Indian's eyes went past the slab to the blue cleft in the hills to the west. McLeon waited for him to speak.

"You came as a friend," he said slowly. "Until now I did not know what the words meant. You will take my canoe and travel swiftly down the river to the fort. You will tell the short carbines that at the fork of the rivers all trace of those you came to find was blotted out. I—" he motioned to

the north—"will go to join the Jumping Salmon."

Without another word Moose Nose reached out his hand. McLeon grasped it firmly. In a moment the Indian had vanished in the gloom of the river spruce.

"The — his dues!" McLeon burst out savagely, when the Indian was quite gone.

He scaled the lob-stick to the slab. Light was failing him, so that he had to work swiftly. First he hewed off the lettering until only the name of his brother remained. Then, carefully and plainly, he cut the names of Galibois and Molony deep into the wood.

THE NORDIC RACE

by Arthur G. Brodeur

MORE than six thousand years ago a horde of tall, blond, long-skulled adventurers poured into Denmark and southern Sweden, whence they spread gradually till they occupied all but the most northern parts of Scandinavia. These were the ancestors of the Germanic, or Nordic, race. From their remote descendants Germany was peopled; of their blood were the Goths, Vandals, Franks, Lombards, Saxons and other nations who broke up the Roman Empire and built a civilization of their own out of its ruins. Later still, the descendants of such of them as remained in Scandinavia after the fall of Rome embarked upon a fresh wave of plunder, invasion and colonization known as the Viking Age. Nor are the Scandinavians of today unworthy of their heroic forefathers—they are still daring sailors, fishermen, merchants and fighting men.

When they first came to the north, this Nordic stock was in the smooth stone age, but they were as civilized as any folk of their time. They quarried flint in south Sweden, traded it all over the north, chipped and polished it into the finest implements any stone-age folk ever made.

About 2000 B. C. this people got hold of bronze implements from the Mediterranean. With true Germanic enterprise they learned how to cast their own utensils: beautifully made saws, swords, dishes—even razors.

The skulls dug from their graves show fine heads of hair, but no beards. Before long they were making the most artistic bronze weapons in the world.

From their trade with the Mediterranean, they got precious metals and Mycenaean urns in exchange for furs and amber. About 700 B. C. they got iron weapons from the south; soon they were smelting their own bog-iron. In their grave-mounds have been found Greek and Roman vases, coins and glass. They had overland trade routes with Greece and Asia Minor; they sailed down the Elbe and Danube; they even coasted western Europe and sailed the Middle Sea. One Swedish grave has yielded a vase signed by a workman whose shop has been dug out of the ruins of Pompeii.

They worshiped the sun and the fruitful earth; and though exquisite artificers and highly skilled in many arts of civilization, they still lived in small groups of tribes. But they were learning of the riches of the Mediterranean world; gradually internal pressure and lust for loot welded them into strong kingdoms, till at last they burst forth in wave on wave of invasion. Before them the Celts drew back, and even the Roman legions had to draw in their lines. At last most of Europe was won by their innumerable hordes—so vast that a Gothic chronicler called Scandinavia "the womb of peoples."

GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

by Harold Willard Gleason

GLOUCESTER-TOWN, with its sheltered bay
 Dotted with sea-craft, grave and gay;
 Shapely schooners and trawlers fat;
 Sloops, from "sonder" to saucy "cat";
 Squatty fishing-smacks, dingy gray,
 Picturesque in their sombre way;
 Frivolous motor-boats, slicing the swells;
 Steam yachts, haughty with brass and bells;
 Dories and dingies and skiffs and punts
 Moored in schools on the water-fronts;
 While down in the cove, where the seagulls scream,
 Loom ribs of vessels athwart the stream,
 Barnacle-clotted,
 Shattered and rotted—
 Once staunch clippers, of grace supreme.

In the Outer Harbor, destroyers ride,
 Lean gray wolves, on the restless tide;
 While a stately cruiser, towering high,
 With masts and funnels that scar the sky,
 Signals a-flutter, seems to strain
 At the cables that curb her from coursing the main.

Gloucester-town, with its winding ways
 Peopled by ghosts of by-gone days;
 Quaint little houses that sleep in the sun,
 Dreaming of Skipper Such-a-one,
 Rolling and roaring, wild with glee
 To be back in port after weeks at sea.
 Gardens with bluebells and scarlet phlox,
 Bordered by shells and white-washed rocks;
 Trellised doorways, where roses blow
 As they blew in welcome long ago
 To weather-browned Skipper Such-a-one
 Blustering home, his sea-trick done.

Where is a spot with more romance
 Than the curving bay where the dingies dance,
 Lined with scarred wharves, which, gaunt and crude,
 Serve in supplying the nation's food,
 Than the city, shaded by elm and oak,
 Home of a sturdy, stalwart folk
 Spreading America's fair renown
 Wherever a wind blows—Gloucester-town?



The White Man's Way

A Complete Novelette

By Georges Surdez

Author of "Out of the East," "West of Chad," etc.

THE Yakoma boatmen sang in unison. At each jerking syllable they plunged their shovel-headed paddles into the stream.

"Eiik, yah, eh—eiik, yah, eh!"

The muscles corded beneath the shiny skin of the ebony backs. As the blades lifted at the end of the stroke, drops of water scintillated in the red sunlight.

The broad river formed the dividing-line between the French Territory of the Ubangi-Shari and the Belgian Congo. The surface of the Ubangi, green and blue, mottled with patches of shimmering light, shaded off into deep black toward the banks. The yellow and red leaves of a knot of trees stood out vividly against the green of the bush.

In the first canoe, Sergeant Peller sat on his camp-chair, rifle across his knee, smoking. Squatting to face him, Bo Diare, corporal of *tirailleurs*—French Native Infantry—hugged his knees to squeeze his bulk in the narrow canoe bottom. The straight featured Ouolof chewed on a twig, to clean his teeth, and droned a Sokolo song. To the rear sat four *tirailleurs* and six Yakoma paddlers.

The second canoe, considerably larger, was loaded down with bundles, manned by eight paddlers, with Private Yatera in command. In the bundles were fifty Gras carbines and ten thousand cartridges for the Bakkasu Post, up-river. A precious load in the region, where high-powered rifles were

at a premium, where even an old percussion gun could purchase two women.

The paddlers were from the Belgian shore. The boatmen usually employed for river service, Yakomas from the French side and N'Sakkaras, had been requisitioned for an expedition farther up the Ubangi some weeks previously. Therefore, the crews were not as dependable as they might have been.

But Peller, whose bronzed face and ease of manner revealed an old hand at the game, did not worry. With six *tirailleurs* he had reasoned that there was little cause for uneasiness. And there was no possibility of an attack from the wandering bands of hostile natives. They had long since learned that a military rifle shoots oftener and straighter than a trade musket. The sergeant lost himself in contemplation of the banks, admired the tall waving grass, rustling in the wind, the flights of birds making for their night perches on the fish nets.

The boatmen ceased singing abruptly; the canoes slid on in silence. The Yakoma headman, who was not engaged in paddling and had opportunity to observe, pointed ahead to a bend in the stream, and whispered excitedly.

"He say hippo there," Bo Diare translated.

Under the slim, twisted arcades of the mangroves, a hippopotamus bathed peacefully. His monstrous back, glistening black, emerged from the water.

Bo Diare, who in turn had looked ahead, announced conclusively—

"He be bull—big too much!"

Peller glanced at the sinking sun behind him, saw the red disc half-hidden by the far bushes, and hesitated.

"Have we got time before night?" he asked.

"Yessah," Bo Diare agreed immediately.

Peller struggled between his strict duty, and the possibility of a good shot. Hunting was a passion with him. The animal was very near the French bank, he argued, and in any case, the paddlers needed meat.

"Tell the men paddle softly," he ordered.

Bo Diare spoke to the leader, who grunted an answer.

"He say he think better go for land. Maybe hippo get mad, smash canoe," Bo Diare advised.

"Tell him make for land."

The canoe pointed toward the left bank. Yatera had seen, and given like orders.

Peller landed on a narrow sand ledge. The canoes were dragged on shore. The white man took his rifle, gave instructions to the *tirailleurs* to watch their charge. Bo Diare was to act as his guide. The Ouolof was as fond of hunting as his superior, and was a far abler bushman. With a last word to Yatera, who took command in Bo Diare's absence, Sergeant Peller followed the corporal into the tall grass. Five minutes brought them to the edge of the thick bush. Bo Diare searched until he found a wild pig-run that would take them in the direction desired. The Ouolof explained that the path was probably used by the pigs to go to the river-bank for water, and would bring them very close to their quarry. A short walk, and, between the boles of two great trees, Peller had a clear view of the river and of the big bull. There were others of the huge beasts—two, three, four, five, Peller counted. But he could not, in decency, shoot more than one. All but the bull were in deep water.

The distance was scarcely sixty feet. The huge target was motionless, save for an occasional yawn.

Carefully, Peller braced his rifle against a branch, aimed, pressed the trigger. A shot. The bull leaped high out of the water, splashed back and bellowed. The others disappeared. The wounded beast turned as if to make for deep water, but another shot halted him. He rolled on his side, his wet

flank emerging. Blood came to the surface, floating slowly down-stream.

"Meat," Bo Diare said, coolly.

After a short wait, to make sure that the bull was quite dead, he crashed down to the water, waded in. In the semi-darkness, his great teeth flashed in a grin.

"Big, big, oh, he be big!"

Peller followed him, trembling with excitement. The animal was a monster in size. A quick examination flattered his vanity. Both shots had gone through the head.

"Call the men," he ordered.

Bo Diare's mouth flew open, and a screech shrilled through the trees. He repeated this call four times, until a like shout answered from the landing-place.

"That be Yatera," the corporal stated.

He shouted again, this time in Mandigo dialect, which was understood by all the *tirailleurs*.

Peller, thigh deep in water, turned around his huge victim, complacently measuring him with outspread fingers. He would be called a liar by his good friends at the Bakkasu Post, but he would prove his point by an exhibition of the tusks, and strips of the thick hide, which could be made into *chicottes*, the raw-hide whips prized as souvenirs. In mid-stream, nostrils appeared, eye bumps. The other animals were curious. Peller was tempted, but restrained himself with effort. The bodies, sinking in deep water, would not float up until long after his departure.

"Here be men," Bo Diare announced.

Through the bushes appeared a straggling line. Six Yakomas and four *tirailleurs*! The sergeant paled. He had taken it for granted that the corporal would summon only one soldier and ten Yakomas. The Ouolof had called for the crew of the first canoe, and Yatera was left alone, in charge of the invaluable cargo, with eight Yakomas. The *tirailleurs*, who despised the native paddlers, had no thought of fear. But contempt is not always safe. It was impossible to blame Bo Diare, who was, after all, only a negro and depended on his white chief for orders. Too late now to question what he had shouted, or to blame Yatera for the blunder. After all, he had only himself to blame, and the excitement that had come over him when he saw the huge hulk in the water.

"Get the teeth, and some meat," he said to Bo Diare. "I'm going back now."

Taking three of the *tirailleurs* with him, he hurried through the darkening bush. He tried to reassure himself with the thought that should the boatmen choose this propitious time for revolt Yatera would take the precaution to remove himself beyond reach of a quick rush, and cover the Yakomas with his rifle.

"Hurry!" he panted to the black who preceded him, for he trusted native sight and footing to find the trail.

Behind him, he heard the chant of the men at work on the carcass of the hippo. From the landing-place of the canoes no sound came. He grew hopeful.

The *tirailleur*, in the lead, who was not a Bo Diare in forest lore, came to the edge of the grass field, and followed the pig-run blindly into the tall grass, striking off from the river side. He realized his mistake, and turned to the white man in dismay.

"I no savvy," he admitted.

The track had been crossed by others. It was useless to attempt to follow it back to the starting-point. Peller took his bearings, hoisted himself on the shoulders of his companions, and looked over the grass tops. The river was to the left. He took the lead and worked his way back carefully.

Shouts, then Yatera's voice rose in warning. A shot.

Peller muttered curses. Desperately he struck through the grass toward the river, in the direction of the uproar. He stumbled, fell, got up again. His belt caught on the spines of the bushes. He tore himself free. His trousers were ripped, his legs bleeding. Behind him, the three soldiers crashed, holding their rifles high above their heads.

A narrow stream cut through the thicket. The water-course must be flowing toward the river. Peller sprang in. Fortunately the water was but knee-high. The *tirailleurs* followed.

Night fell suddenly.

Ahead, silence. At last, Peller discerned the sand ledge. He stumbled toward the spot where the canoes had been. They were gone! Nothing there, save the piled knapsacks of the soldiers. Near these, a prone figure; some distance away two or three more.

From the stream came the splashing of hastily wielded paddles, and exclamations, ringing loudly in the stillness. Peller called out in French, then had one of his men call out to the boatmen in their dialect. No

answer coming, he fired. The *tirailleurs* in their turn worked their pieces, and the detonations echoed. But the splashing grew fainter.

"Call Bo Diare."

The blacks obeyed.

The corporal answered from near at hand. He had hurried back at the first shot, and, not having lost his way, had arrived soon after Peller.

"The Yakomas stole the rifles," Peller said, "and killed Yatera."

What followed may seem cruel, but sentiment finds little place in African hearts. Yatera had been killed by Yakomas. There were six Yakomas at hand, relatives of those who had done the killing, who would have helped if present. Peller was unable to oppose the rapid execution. The men were bayoneted and shot before he could interfere. Their anger somewhat appeased, the soldiers stood about irresolutely. Their business was killing. Thinking was the white man's.

"A lantern?" Peller asked, still dazed by the turn of events.

Bo Diare rummaged through the packs that had been left behind, found a lantern. Peller lighted it. Yatera had made a fight. Three Yakomas were on the ground, two with bayonet thrusts through their bellies, the third's head blown open by a shot. Yatera lay on his back, blood streaming from his head and arms. As Peller brought the light close to his face, his eyelids flickered.

"Savage take rifles," he moaned, and lapsed into unconsciousness.

Peller stripped the private's coat from his back and examined the wounds. He counted seven slices on shoulders and arms, and two across the skull. The cloth had protected the arms to some extent. As for the head, the thick *chechia* and thicker skull had served the *tirailleur*, and even the blows from the heavy bush-knives had but stunned him. With the usual vitality of the black, Yatera was soon able to sit up, and talk coherently.

"I fight!" he said. "But they flog me with *coupe-coupes*, flog me for arm, flog me for head."

"Thou didst well, Yatera," Peller assured him. "No man can fight eight and win."

"After Bo Diare call men, men from first canoe go. I be alone with Yakomas. I hold rifle on Yakomas. One he say, 'Maybe we

light fire for cook meat?' 'Yes,' I say. 'How can light fire, no wood?' he say. 'Go get 'um.' I say. Three Yakomas go for wood. Then some one flog me with knife from back, on head. I fall. I get up, kill one, kill two. Again they flog me on head. I fall. Yakomas cut, cut my arm. They run. I get up, shoot one. Then I no fit fight no more. I go dead."

Yatera had risen twice after blows that would have cleft a white man's skull. Peller visualized the encounter on the sand-bank, one against eight, the fallen man, after the rain of knife blows finding the strength to fire one shot, and calm enough in the frenzy of combat, to aim straight and kill his man. If he himself had attended to his duty as had the black!

The bull hippo had come high—nine killed, one wounded, and fifty modern rifles in black men's hands, which meant more deaths to come. Then and there, Peller made a vow. Hippopotami would be as sacred to him as to the Keita family of the Bambaras, who claim blood relationship with the river-horses.

His attention was called elsewhere. Bo Diare, by the light of another lantern, was bending over the bodies of the Yakomas, collecting fetishes, little leather bags hung around the neck, containing a leopard's claw, or a bit of tusk, or again the dried ear of a fallen enemy, all guarantees of immunity against dangers which had failed their wearers now in the emergency.

"These *gris-gris* no good," Bo Diare declared. "But other savage he no savvy they no good. I go sell 'em."

The bodies were lifted by the *tirailleurs* and thrown into the river.

"Yakomas be good for crocodile," the corporal suggested. "When we go catch others?"

"The thieves?" Peller asked.

"Yes. They be for other side of river."

"We have no canoes to cross."

"Morning come, I fix wood, float."

"The other side of the river is Belgian."

Bo Diare grinned.

"I no savvy Belgian. Belgian no savvy me. Yakomas be for other side, *tirailleurs* can go, too."

To the Ouolof, territorial limitations did not exist.

Peller considered. The rifles were on Belgian soil, but the nearest Belgian post was a hundred miles away. Little likelihood

indeed, that an incursion into neutral territory would be found out. He could not give up the rifles, go back to the Bakkasu Post and report the loss. Had he lost them under an overwhelming attack, he would have felt no shame. But he could scarcely imagine himself reporting to the sullen little captain in command:

"Your rifles were delivered to me, all right. But, you see, I went hunting, and while I was away, the boatmen stole them."

Even the carefully noted measurements of the largest bull hippopotamus ever shot in the Ubangi would not gain leniency. There had been a possibility that Peller would soon become a commissioned officer. Should he return without the rifles and the cartridges, a court martial stared him in the face. He could bid his promotion adieu, then. In commanding native troops, no mistakes of subordinates can be offered as excuse. The white man is alone responsible.

Yatera, emerging from the hands of a surgically inclined comrade, appeared wrapped in white bandages, from which protruded the tips of the macerated leaves used as disinfectant and curative salve, according to the approved notions of native healers. He approached the fire, which the cook had lighted, and on which bubbled a cast-iron pot, filled with rice. Philosophically, he stretched his tin plate forward for a portion. One thought was uppermost—keep alive until the next meeting with the Yakomas.

Peller realized that he had best take a leaf from the negro's book; eat, sleep, and be fresh for the morrow. He lay in his blanket, face to the stars, and puzzled—to break the neutrality and invade the Belgian Congo, or wreck his career. There is a proverb which says, "Night brings good counsel."

He would not make his decision until morning.



DAWN. In the east, the sun rose over the trees, the river appeared a reddish flood, sweeping down between the dark shores. Then the mist lifted gradually, the light grew stronger, and the Belgian shore was revealed.

Peller smiled. His decision was made.

Boundaries did not exist in Central Africa. The trees on the far side were like those on French territory. The same clear sky closed down over both. Had the Belgians been hard-pressed, and in danger of massacre by black enemies, no thought of neutrality

would have kept him from crossing to help. And it was to the interest of the Belgians to prevent fifty bush warriors from roaming the trails with rifles that could hit as far as eye could see in the limited horizon of the bush. One is usually able to find a course of reasoning to justify a deed.

Using the heavy bush-knives of the dead Yakomas, the *tirailleurs* hewed down small trees. These were shorn of their branches, the trunks bound together with stout vines into a very practical raft. Bo Diare, who was diversely talented, superintended the construction, and grinned with pleasure when the rough craft was launched. While the others were manufacturing paddles, he disappeared, to come back before the moment of departure with the tusks of the bull hippo. His surprise was great when Peller declined with a shrug of annoyance.



The packs were piled in the center of the raft, the seven men took their places, and two privates pushed against the sand with long poles. The raft stirred, floated free, and the trip was begun.

In the shallow water near the shore, progress was easy, as the poles could be used. Soon, however, the long sticks failed to touch bottom, and the paddles were brought into use. The current was not swift, yet the unwieldy float twisted and spun in spite of the efforts of the paddlers. The small party was carried two miles downstream before making shore.

Sergeant Peller experienced a last hesitation, then leaped ashore. He glanced at his watch, and made a mental note—one o'clock.

The *tirailleurs* followed and impressed by Peller's evident perturbation were silent. The thing was done. Peller and his men, bearing arms, were on Belgian soil. But nothing happened. No threatening voice

came from the bushes, no indignant official appeared. A signed treaty, secure in European governments' vaults, affected nothing on the Ubangi.

Peller, who had been blinded to the difficulties of his task by the decision to invade neutral soil, found his troubles had just begun. Where should he look for the fugitives? He found the abandoned canoes with ease. Bo Diare declared that the tracks indicated assistance from the villagers. But that was all. Before the pursuers extended unbroken forest, with a network of trails as complicated as the mythological labyrinth.

The Ouolof, as usual took the lead. The tiny expedition sank into the bush.

A village appeared, deserted. Miles farther another also proved empty by a hasty search of the huts. The third, attained at dusk, showed every evidence of recent flight, cooking-pots scattered about, fires still smoking. Here, the search was successful. Yatera brought out a youth of fifteen or sixteen, naked save for a loin-cloth, who at first appeared to be deaf and dumb. He did nothing but roll frightened eyes at the unfamiliar complexion of the sergeant.

A well-handled rifle butt, where the seat of his trousers should have been, brought first howls, then information. Yes, men, strangers, had passed through the village earlier in the day, bearing bundles. How fast were they traveling? They were not hurrying. Had the villagers helped them carry the bundles? Yes, upon promise of two rifles. The Yakomas had not expected pursuit. The people had been surprised by the news of Peller's coming and had made a quick exodus. The boy had evidently stayed behind to do a little plundering before the arrival of the white man. Continued insistence by Bo Diare, and the boy recalled where the two rifles had been buried. They were unearthed, together with about one hundred cartridges. The youth was pressed into service to carry them and the march proceeded.

Apart from the breathing spaces of ten minutes every hour, no halt was made. The pace was more of a dog-trot than a walk. Night found them still on the trails. By midnight, Peller concluded that he would not be able to catch up with the thieves that night, and decided to rest at the next clearing until morning.

He relaxed, lighted a cigaret. After all,

he should not have expected to conclude matters in a few hours.

Bo Diare unexpectedly grasped him by the arm, took the cigaret from his lips, crushed the burning end beneath his horny sole.

"Listen!"

From far off came the voices of men, clearly perceptible above the concert of bush sounds.

"Yakomas?" Peller questioned in a whisper.

"No savvy. I hear talk, no words."

"Tie the boy and gag him," Peller ordered for in any event caution was needed.

The youth was relieved of his burden, tied hand and foot, his head bound in a scarf. Yatera, whose wounds unfitted him for active duty, was detailed to watch him.

"Hide him in the bushes," Peller said, then turned to the others. "You three, stay close by the trail, on the left side. Bo Diare and I will take the right. No sound. No one to fire before I do. When you shoot, shoot down or up the trail, not across it. You might hit us. Understand?"

A whispered assent, and the men disappeared into the bush. Peller crouched in the undergrowth, rifle by his side. He took the revolver from its holster, and placed it in the waist-band of his trousers. The sound of tramping men drew closer, and grunted words came to the listeners.

Bo Diare brought his lips close.

"Yakomas——"

Peller braced himself for a leap. A man passed on the trail. The weapon was too short to be a trade-musket. Peller became certain that the men were in possession of his guns.

He aimed and fired.

From their hiding-places, his men brought their pieces into action. The attacked party, with surprising celerity, replied, and flashes streaked the darkness. But the men on the trail were at a great disadvantage, being in a comparatively lighter spot than the thicket on each side. From a dark bundle slung on a pole between two men, a white shadow emerged. A man in a hammock, and wearing a white *bounou* cloth was certainly a leader. To capture him meant that Peller could claim his rifles for ransom.

"Bayonet!" he called.

He himself led the way, and made for the hammock. His well-aimed blow with the

bayonet was shoved aside, and a terrific smash against his helmet dazed him.

Bo Diare had the man about the chest, Peller seized him round the knees, and brought him crashing to the ground.

"Tie him up, Bo Diare," he said, in French. "He's the chief."

The fallen man stopped struggling.

"I surrender, *monsieur*, I surrender," he said in French.

"Who are you?" Peller demanded, startled.

"Belgian Service—Captain Carlotti."

"Are those your men?"

"Yes."

"*Nom de Dieu!*" Peller groaned, straightening up.

Then he bellowed:

"Cease firing! At ease! Rest!" A succession of orders meant to bring a halt to the butchery.

The stranger also scrambled up, called to his men, first in dialect, then in French. Gradually, the firing ceased. The natives stood still, surprised to hear the voices of two white men.

"*Tirailleurs*, here!" Peller ordered.

The soldiers grouped near him. There were no wounded, due to the advantage of concealment and surprise.

The Belgian officer was counting his men, getting reports. The supposed Yakomas were in uniforms. The rifles they carried were Belgian rifles and not Peller's Gras carbines. The sergeant wiped the sweat from his face. What a ghastly business!

"Any one hurt?" he asked the captain.

"Three killed, two wounded," Carlotti replied, without emotion.

"I thought you were Yakomas," Peller offered lamely. "I'm certain I heard——"

"I have several Yakomas in my troop," Carlotti pointed out. "As they know this part of the country, naturally I had them lead. First thing I knew, I was dumped from my hammock, and you were on me! But what are you doing here?"

"I'm after Yakomas who stole a cargo of rifles for the Bakkasu Post."

"You're on Belgian territory."

"Am I?" Peller exclaimed, with feigned surprise.

"I don't see how you can ignore it," Carlotti said, dryly. "The Ubangi's between here and French soil."

"That's right," Peller agreed. "But don't you think we'd better make for a clearing,

camp for the night, and discuss the report of this affair?"

Carlotti agreed to retrace his steps to the next village. The Belgian troopers picked up their dead, fearing, that should the corpses be left by the wayside, they would find a resting place in the stomachs of the neighboring villagers.

The village proved to be deserted, as all the others. Thirty or forty conical huts, each surmounted with an ornamental spike, a rough wooden barrier to shut off the forest made up the habitations. Peller investigated the interior of the huts, found them filthy. He came back to the central place, and joined Carlotti before the fire.

The captain was a tall, muscular man, about forty years of age, swarthy faced, with long mustaches bristling from beneath his nose. He was one of the Italians who had come to the Congo for King Leopold of Belgium. Leopold believed that men accustomed to a warm climate could stand the hardships better than Nordic Europeans. And indeed, the captain showed no trace of his admitted fifteen years' stay in Africa.

Peller had expected him to be curt, considering the unfortunate incident. He was agreeably surprised when the Italian offered him a cigaret, and a share in the bottle of wine, served by a white jacketed boy.

The sergeant explained the sequence of events that had led up to the meeting on the trail.

"I'm on your territory; the harm has been done. I'm ready to turn my arms over to you, and go back to your post until your Government and mine decide what's to be done. I'm deeply sorry for the loss of your men," he concluded.

"No record of my men is kept, except by myself, sergeant. I enroll them, drill them, discharge them. I won't report this. It would make more trouble than the fellows were worth. There's the whole Congo to get more from."

Peller, in his peculiar position, should have been pleased at the Italian's callousness. He knew that many white men, even among his own people, considered the blacks as cattle. But he heard with deep restrained disgust this light dismissal of three killings. Had a Belgian force invaded French soil, and killed one of his men, he would have seen to it that some one paid.

"I don't approve of technicalities in international questions in this region," Carlotti

went on. "It would be better if all white men worked together, and let the negroes know it. But let's consider your case. I did not pass your thieves. I presume I know where they went."

The boy captive was brought forward, and Carlotti questioned him in the native tongue. The youth answered swiftly. It was evident that he was very much afraid of the Belgian officer.

Carlotti turned to Peller.

"It's as I thought. There's a big Yakoma village down the river a few miles. That's where your men will end up. There's a *Zeriba*—chief's residence—there. The old rascal is always after guns, and will pay higher for them than any one else in the region. You can get there tomorrow by noon. I'll send one of my men with you, to inform Chief Tari that he's to deliver your rifles to you. I have seen him on my inspection trips, and he knows enough to obey."

"Thank you," Peller said. "I'm really——"

"Don't speak of it, sergeant. A service to a fellow white man——"

He dismissed the subject with a wave of the hand.

"If I ever have occasion to help you, I will," Peller said, feelingly. "But what brought you out on the trails so late at night?"

"I had word that the Boubous were crossing the Ubangi," Carlotti explained.

"So far east?" Peller exclaimed.

"Just a rumor. But I wanted to find out for myself."

To travel at night over bush trails is not a pastime indulged in from caprice. And certainly mere rumors did not warrant this energetic action in a man obviously fond of his comforts. A raid by Boubous would result in but a few casualties, with the villagers doing their share of the killing. Moreover, Carlotti's complete disregard for native lives made this solicitude sound ridiculous.

True, the Boubous were savage enough. For many years, the N'Sakkaras tribe had tried to make them pay tribute. But the Boubous never weakened. They lived on the right side of the Kotta River, and it was scarcely believable that large parties could have moved down to the Ubangi and across without being reported by the French posts.

Carlotti went on to explain.

For several years the Boubous had been accumulating arms and ammunition. Unscrupulous traders supplied them with these in exchange for elephant tusks. Finding themselves strongly armed, they had decided to turn their newly obtained power to profit. Evidently, they did not want to antagonize the French who controlled their land, but raiding-parties often moved across the river. Not long ago, one of these bands had surprised the women and children of a village by the water-side and carried off many. In the resulting skirmish with the warriors of the settlement, the chief, who was one of Tari's sons, had been hit in the shoulder by a poisoned arrow, and had died.

Peller, listening carefully, saw an opportunity to help his new friend.

"Your course is all indicated, captain," he suggested. "You come down to the village with me. Old Tari will assuredly be willing to help you against his son's murderers. You can pick up a band of auxiliaries. And, by the way, is the village a fishermen's center?"

"Yes."

"Then you can obtain canoes. After I get my rifles, I'll proceed up-river, near the French bank. You keep near the Belgian shore. If you meet with the Boubous, I'll prevent them from landing on the French side, give you enough time to inflict punishment upon them that'll keep them quiet for a time. If they should be on the French side, I'll land and turn them with my *tirailleurs*, drive them into sight at the bank. Though you are prevented from landing on Ubangi territory, there's nothing preventing you and your men to fire from the canoes."

Carlotti thought the proposition over for a time.

"That's true," he concluded. "I could make faster time by canoe than through the bush."

The Italian's servants brought out food, a variety of tinned goods that bewildered Peller, used for the last few weeks to the scanty diet of the far outposts.

"You travel like a prince!" he remarked, indicating with a gesture the pile of iron boxes near by, which all bore the captain's name, and appeared to be personal baggage.

Carlotti seemed somewhat annoyed at the remark, mumbled a vague answer, and changed the subject.

With good food, good wine, Peller's spirits

rose. His delay of two of three days occasioned by the theft of the rifles would be easily explained away. The captain, accustomed to the improbable yarns of his subordinates, would smile unbelievably and drop the matter. His record would be clear, his commission would come.

And all through the courtesy of this amiable captain. Men of his sort were not met with every day. Another might have insisted upon carrying the matter as far as it would go. There would have been endless discussion, every one would have been disturbed, and Peller, the unwilling cause, might have been court-martialed.

"A night-cap?" Carlotti suggested.

"Your health, captain!" Peller replied.

Then he sought his blanket, his mind at peace, his body delightfully satisfied with the splendid dinner. As he lay down, he saw Carlotti, still seated by the fire, with the light dancing on his face, the face of a Calabrian bandit.

"Bah, if one were to judge by appearances!" Peller murmured. "Carlotti certainly is a gentleman."

Then he went to sleep.



TARI'S village was situated on a rocky promontory jutting out into the Ubangi from a curve of the river-bank. The trees had been cleared away, up to the very edge of the dense forest, and the approach to the stockade was bare save for huge reddish boulders showing above the coarse grass. From the bush limit it was possible to see the entire village, the surface of the Ubangi and, a thousand yards beyond, the French shore.

The two white men and their followers approached. It was evident their arrival had been announced by runners. The streets were crowded with blacks. The *Zeriba*, a large hut the size of ten ordinary dwellings, loomed above the many conical huts. A red rag, doubtless an emblem, hung to the pole before the building.

"Looks populous," Peller remarked.

"Large town, Tari's," Carlotti said, smiling. "A sort of calling port for every canoe on the river. Supply center for the fisher folk."

Carlotti, experienced Colonial that he was, knew the value of an impressive demonstration. He decided to march his men into the town in good order, in step. Among his baggage, the Italian found a

bugle, but not one in his troop could play. One of the *tirailleurs* declared he could coax sound from the brass trumpet. The united Belgian and French forces entered through the main gate, to the inspiring, though hardly recognizable strains of the bugle prelude to "*Sambre et Meuse*," a stirring marching tune.

Carlotti marched first, at the head of his thirty odd men. Then followed Peller and his *tirailleurs*, the servants and bearers of the Italian's suite bringing up the rear. Not being musical critics, the population was delighted. The party headed for the *Zeriba* between two walls of grinning blacks, the "pickins" straggling behind in imitation of the soldiers.

What might be called the lawn of the *Zeriba* formed a spacious semi-circle, free from huts. The building itself, thatched with palm-leaves and elevated from the soil on short posts, was surrounded by a covered veranda. Lined up, awaiting them, stood Tari, the chief and his "courtiers."

Tari proved to be a tall, fat negro, with an underlying muscular foundation that spoke plainly of a superb physical development during his younger years. A few strands of white beard depended from his chin. He was clad in a wide native straw hat, voluminous loose trousers such as are worn by the Bambaras in the Sudan, and sandals. The trousers, held by neither belt nor suspenders, appeared to hang on his rotund waist by a miracle. Such as he was, even with ridiculous garments, he looked the leader. His large black eyes were fearless, and held a lurking glint of cunning. His bulbous nose revealed that gin had penetrated into his village.

He bore no arms; neither did his immediate followers. But the warriors in the background bristled with spears. Peller noticed a few guns of various makes, and several long bows. As to race, the men were doubtless a mixture of Banziris and Yakomas. They were Yakoma in features but affected the Banziri bead head-dress.

Carlotti touched the brim of his helmet in salute.

"Greetings," he said in French.

Tari spoke excellent French. For many years he had been in touch with both Belgian and French, and had at one time been host to a missionary, one of the White Fathers. Peller and the captain shook hands with him and offered a similar

courtesy to the more important chiefs. Tari offered stools and they sat down on the veranda. Carlotti first questioned the old man with regard to the affairs of his people. The captain had ordered drinks to be brought from his baggage. The bottles were circulated freely from thick lips to thick lips.

"Have you seen any strangers lately?" Carlotti asked.

"No," Tari replied without hesitation.

"But I heard that a party of Yakoma boatmen came to you not later than yesterday."

"Perhaps—" Tari agreed. "I would not disturb myself for them. They are not important."

"These men had two hundred rifles to sell."

The chief started violently.

"So you know something about them," Carlotti accused.

"They spoke of but fifty!" Tari exclaimed.

Carlotti had winked at Peller. His smile broadened as he continued to cross-question the simple old chief.

"So they offered them to you—" Carlotti asserted.

"Yes," Tari agreed sullenly.

"And you bought them?" the captain went on.

"How could I? I must have time to gather things to barter. The Yakomas would not take women in payment."

"How much have you paid already?" Carlotti asked.

Tari hesitated. But he was evidently afraid of the Belgian officer.

"Many cases of beads," he replied. "All I had. I'm getting together iron tools to pay for the rest."

Peller calculated. Each of the rifles was worth five women, or five hundred francs, representing the staggering total of twenty-five thousand francs for the lot. No wonder Tari found difficulty in raising the sum.

"Are the boatmen here now?" he asked.

"Yes."

Carlotti ordered them brought before him. Tari did his best to prevent their cross-examination, but Carlotti smilingly insisted. The captain brought out the fact that the old chief had offered the boatmen ten cases of beads, and when they refused had seized the rifles and paid them nothing.

The river-boys had stayed hoping that Tari would relent.

"They were thieves," Tari stated in explanation.

"The rifles must be given back to the rightful owner," Carlotti informed him.

"But the rifles are mine," Tari protested. "If the Frenchman wants them let him pay me for them!"

"Then first pay the Yakomas, who will have to pay the sergeant, who will in turn pay you," Carlotti suggested without a smile. "For if taking the rifles without payment is wrong for the white man, it is wrong for Chief Tari, wrong for the Yakomas. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Tari agreed sullenly.

"And further—" Carlotti went on, "thou wilt supply the white man here with two canoes, and fourteen paddlers."

The old man's countenance fell.

"I will pay the paddlers with beads," Peller assured him. "And will join two whole cases of beads for thee, and a case of gin."

"When?"

"On my return trip from Bakkasu."

"That is little for the rifles," Tari remarked. "But if the captain so orders, I obey."

"Where are the rifles?" Sergeant Peller asked.

"In the hut over there," Tari indicated. "Forty-eight in number. No cartridges have been used."

After another pull at the bottle, Tari seemed to forget his loss, and took Peller to the store-house, where, together they checked the rifles. To honor his guests, Tari assigned to each a large hut, and with true hospitality, as understood in Africa, offered various comforts. Peller ordered his *tirailleurs* not to stray from the immediate vicinity. Carlotti gave his men full liberty to circulate about the town. The Italian's soldiers were not Moslems, as were Peller's, and soon showed the effects of strong drink. The sergeant had already noticed the utter absence of discipline in the organization. It was evident they feared Carlotti, but among themselves rank did not count. A corporal and a private engaged in a fight in the center of the town, biting and clawing, to the amusement of the population.

Bo Diare's clean cut face expressed his disgust.

"They be savages," he said.

That night a dance was held to celebrate the presence of the white men. Heaps of branches had been gathered in the central place, before Tari's *Zeriba*. The fires were lighted at sunset. The youths of the village piled on fuel, and the flames shot up ten or twelve feet. Fifty of Tari's youngest wives, tall, well-shaped creatures, less than scantily clad, formed the first "ballet."

The supple black bodies twisted in the stiff paces required by the traditional figures of the dance. A confusion of smooth, shining shoulders and arms, of grinning teeth, veiled in a cloud of dust lifted by the trampling feet, tinted red by the firelight. Necklaces clinked, copper bracelets flashed, and the mad whirl went on. At the first sign of faltering, Tari clapped his hands to call renewed frenzy from the performers. When the women fell, one by one, on their faces, exhausted, others took their places.

The tomtoms rumbled steadily. Caught by the contagion of excitement, elderly "mammies" broke from the circle of on-lookers, and went through the paces, greeted by jeering shouts. One carried a baby astride her hips, the tiny bullet head bobbing at every leap. Peller saw Bo Diare smile contemptuously and turn to speak to one of the men. Doubtless he drew a comparison between this dance and the *tamtams* of the Sudan, the Sudan, where lithe Bambara girls swayed to tambourines and flutes.

After the women, warriors of the higher clan advanced, armed with heavy spears. They were tried men who had served their initiation, had been whipped and had fasted. Their faces and chests were painted with white designs. They advanced, retreated, fell, rose again, leaping into the air with triumphant shouts.

A man was then whipped until the blood oozed from the welts on his back, left by the flaying raw-hide. He stood grinning, arms held aloft, turning now and then to offer an untouched surface to the whipper. He gloried in his ability to endure pain. When the exhibition was over he nonchalantly resumed his place in the circle, apparently unconscious of his bleeding torso.

"Curious people," Peller mused. "They can stand wounds and physical pain that would render a white man unconscious. Yet, organic disease finds them helpless,

like frightened animals. They have no moral resistance."

"Illness is hidden from them," Carlotti explained. "And anything hidden is all powerful, not to be resisted. That's why the sorcerers hold their power. And also, the chiefs. A few years ago, perhaps tonight if we were not here, heads would be cut off for the enjoyment of the crowd. "And—" he added, "when one sees the manner in which they are treated by their leaders, one is inclined to regard as ridiculous the white men who treat these tribes with punctilious consideration."

"Teach them individuality and self-respect!" Peller protested. "They quickly answer to good treatment."

"And become unbearably conceited. No, let the future generations take care of that. Civilization is a slow-growing plant that must be nurtured, and can not be grafted on barbarism."

"And there we have the controversy in a nutshell," Peller said, smilingly.

He did not state his opinion. But his own *tirailleurs*, tactfully handled, their beliefs and pride respected, had proved the making of real men in the blacks. Oppression would have turned Bo Diare into a cringing lying weakling. Now he was a proud, devoted soldier with a code of ethics.

A man elbowed his way through the crowd. He was naked and covered with sweat. He approached Tari, and spoke to him. Tari laid his hand on Carlotti's arm.

"Another white man is coming," he said.

"Who is he?" Carlotti asked quickly.

"A *Belge*, as thou art, the runner says."

"What does he look like? How many men has he with him?" Carlotti questioned.

After a brief speech with the newcomer, Tari went on:

"He is taller than thou, very tall. And his face has no hair. With him are many men, soldiers with rifles, and one of the big rifles that fires many shots."

"Tall, beardless," murmured Carlotti. "That must be Doucet."

Peller got to his feet, Carlotti also. Tari, seeing that his guests had lost interest in the performance of the warriors halted the entertainment with a gesture.

"What's Doucet's rank?" Peller asked.

"He's a major. That is, officially.

Really is a sort of missionary, bearing shoulder-straps. He worships authority as these blacks worship their fetishes."

"That's pleasant!" Peller declared. "I'd better take the rifles now, and cross, captain."

But a change had come over Carlotti. His friendly genial manner had left him.

"I have done my best to help you out, sergeant," he said. "I can not, however, risk more. You must stay here."

"Stay—here?"

Carlotti nodded, and lifted a metal whistle to his lips, blew three shrill blasts. The white men had already left the old chief. Carlotti's soldiers and bearers gathered immediately.

"I'm sorry at the turn of affairs," the captain went on. "But I must ask you to give up your arms and remain confined to your quarters."

Peller was overcome by a sudden premonition, a warning that he should not give up his arms. The day before he had offered them to Carlotti. He could not have given reasons for his change of mind, save a vague distrust of Carlotti, a distrust that had been growing for some hours. The captain, in his conversation with Tari, had not broached the subject of the Bouobous raiders. The chief had lost a son, according to Carlotti. In all determined belief of native character he would have cried out loudly for revenge. Moreover Carlotti had been obviously startled by the news of Doucet's approach. Peller was warned by that instinct that comes to men through long years of danger and hardship.

"Can you not take my parole, captain?" he asked.

Carlotti hesitated.

"There is no need to disarm my men. Major Doucet may listen favorably to my explanation."

The Italian evidently sensed his determination.

"I'll take your parole," he said shortly. "Get to your quarters and keep your men indoors, as well as yourself."

"Thank you," Peller acknowledged.

He gathered his men, and led the way to the hut.

"Then we no catch rifles back?" Bo Diare asked.

"Evidently not."

"I no like that!"

Peller laughed.

"Neither do I. But what am I to do?"

Bo Diare was dejected.

"White man's palaver, I no savvy."

Within the hut the blacks settled themselves as comfortably as the limited space would allow. Pipe and cigarets were lighted. Peller went to the doorway for a breath of cool night air, and sat on the threshold. At a distance he saw Carlotti and Tari in heated conversation. Then the fires died out. Hours passed. Peller heard the snores of his men. But he, himself, could not sleep.

About two o'clock, he heard the tramping of many men, shouts from the direction of the beach. Then Carlotti appeared with a number of his soldiers. He swung a lantern as he walked.

"Please re-enter the hut and stay there," he ordered. "I am placing two sentries over you."

"But—" Peller started to protest, surprised that Carlotti should doubt his word.

"But nothing—" Carlotti concluded, and walked away.

The two sentries, rifles on shoulders, took up their post by the doorway.

Peller went within and tried to sleep.



"SERGEANT."

He was aware that Bo Diare spoke. He stirred and sought for complete consciousness.

"Chief be here, want to talk," Bo Diare went on.

"Uh?" Peller sat up and rubbed his eyes. "What's that?"

"Chief says other white man went away with rifles."

Had the situation been less serious, Peller would have laughed. He reached for his helmet, which he clamped on his head, and stepped out into the open, buttoning his tunic. It was daylight, and Tari was waiting for him, a few feet from the hut.

"Good morning, chief," Peller began courteously. "What dost thou want?"

"I want nothing. But the captain said that you should be told that you could go whenever you wished."

"And the rifles?"

"He took them with him."

"Where?"

"He did not say."

Apparently firearms made thieves of all men in the Ubangi, thought Peller; they

caused even the Italian to turn bandit. Out of the question indeed to follow him, for he had enough men to hold the rifles by force. The only course now was to cross to French territory and take his medicine from the captain at Bakkasu.

"I want two canoes, which will be paid for, and paddlers," he said to Tari.

Tari held up his hands to express utter helplessness.

"No canoes," he stated briefly.

"No canoes!" Peller exclaimed. "But yesterday, I saw—"

"Yesterday is not today. The captain took what he needed. The rest were broken up and burned during the night. The captain said he did not want other white men to have canoes to follow him."

"Why is he afraid of Doucet?"

"I do not know."

"When will the other white man be here?"

"Noon time, or a little before, or a little after. He left his camp an hour ago, the drums said."

"I'll wait for him here," Peller said.

"But the fisher-folk are angered by the burning of their canoes, and say, unless thou dost pay for them they will kill thee."

"What have I to do with the burning?"

"They are savages, the fishermen, and think all white men belong to one tribe. I told them I was coming to claim payment for the canoes."

"But I have not that with which to pay them!"

"They are waiting for thy answer, guarded by my spearmen. But I can not hold them long. They are two hundred, and more, not all of my people, and I can not deny them what they think is due. I came to warn thee to flee."

Peller speculated. Two hundred men, some of them armed with muskets, were dangerous to his small force. Should he set out on the forest trails, they would certainly follow him. He would be at a disadvantage, as he could not concentrate his fire or properly handle his men. Also he questioned the old chief's altruism. Perhaps Tari would wish the killing of a Frenchman to take place outside his village. Great as was his power as chief, he could not, without risking his popularity, deny revenge to the injured boatmen. To the average native all white men are of the

same family and responsible for each other's deeds.

"I'll stay here," Peller said. "Let the boatmen come."

Tari hesitated.

"Mark me, Frenchman, I have no hand in this!"

"Then hold thy message to the canoe-men for a few minutes and I will thank thee for my life."

Peller inspected all sides of the hut, saw, in every direction a free field for rifle-fire. Protected to some extent by the mud walls he might be able to hold the fishermen at bay until Doucet's arrival. He found enough timber to blockade the door. With a machete the *tirailleurs* pierced loopholes. Tari had disappeared. Peller and his men awaited developments.

Yatera, who was watching at the front loophole, clucked his tongue in warning. Peller glanced out. The streets beyond the *Zeriba* were filling with men. The crowd soon overflowed into the open space. Many of Tari's warriors had joined the canoemen. Probably word had gone around that the presence of the Frenchman on the Belgian shore was not justified, and that little reprisal would be taken in case he should be killed.

A musket coughed, and a heavy slug splintered the barricade in the doorway. Peller heard the breech of Bo Diare's rifle snap shut, and warned his men:

"Shoot for the legs. Try not to kill!"

The sharp crack of a Gras carbine, and the native, who had fired the first shot, dropped his piece, grasped his knees with both hands, and howled. Bo Diare, who was a fair shot, had scored a hit with Peller "calling" the spot. This first casualty cooled the attackers somewhat, and they halted irresolutely.

A *tirailleur* was teaching the young Yakoma captive to load the rifles so that two extra pieces could be brought into use. The boy had forgotten his fear of his captors, had admired the uniforms and was now eager to learn. He said that he would become a *tirailleur*. Had the men outside been from the boy's own village still he would have been willing to kill. From now on he was won over to the regulars. Peller had often seen this conversion, but he never ceased to wonder.

The fishermen appeared to have come to a decision, and a number rushed forward.

The Gras cracked steadily, and the group was dispersed, one man after another dropping. Not all were shot in the legs. The *tirailleurs*, purposely, or otherwise, forgot their instructions in the heat of conflict.

Suddenly Bo Diare fell back from his loophole, and put a hand to the side of his head. Blood trickled down his fingers. A slug, striking a stone in the open, had ricocheted through the narrow aperture, and torn through his ear.

"Savage!" the Ouolof commented.

Maddened by the minor wound, he reverted to the primitive, tore off his upper garments, with only his trousers and red chechia to distinguish him from the half naked canoemen who now swarmed on all sides of the hut. Spears pried at the timbers barring the door. The attack had assumed a serious turn.

A crashing detonation and the sergeant's helmet fell off. He turned and saw the threatening end of a double barreled musket close to his face. But some one had leaped forward. A clash of steel, and a second shot resounded, followed immediately by the sharper crack of a Gras. On the floor lay the young Yakoma, his chest drenched with blood. From the ceiling hung an arm. Following this arm with his eyes, Peller saw the torso of a man hanging within. One of the natives had been hoisted by his comrades to the roof, had cautiously pierced the thatch, and aimed at the white man. The boy had knocked the musket aside, made the attacker miss his first shot, but had been hit by the second. Wounded, he had found the strength to kill his man.

"Savage," he groaned.

Savage, the first and only word of French he had learned.

Peller was about to bend close and examine his wound, but at that moment, the barricade before the door gave way, and the canoemen rushed forward. Bo Diare met them in the doorway, his great figure looming above the stockier river-boys. He parried and thrust with the bayonet. Peller, standing behind him revolver in hand, fired when necessary. The struggle was brief. Not finding hand-to-hand encounter to their liking the fishermen fled, followed by shots from the hut.

Bo Diare sank his bayonet in the loose earth soil, then wiped it clean with a piece of oiled rag.

Peller did what he could to ease the Yakoma youth. He saw immediately death was a matter of seconds. He nevertheless made a pretense at a rough bandage, his powerful hands unusually gentle. He sensed anew the bitterness of the raw primitive life of the bush, which is pitiless and takes no account of youth or weakness. An unexpected remorse swept over him. Why had he brought the poor fellow along? Why had he not freed him at once? Nervously he lighted a cigaret and moved away to the door, where he stood and looked out.

The fishermen were picking up their dead and wounded. Peller forbade his men to shoot upon them. When he looked around the negro appeared to be asleep. He was dead. Bo Diare reached down, took the small leather bag from his neck.

"Give me the *gris gris*," Peller said.

He slipped the amulet into his pocket. The youth's life had paid for his. Fate worked in strange ways. One is picked for death, the other left behind. When would his turn come? A lead slug could tear through white skin, as easily as through black tissues.

"*Gris gris* be no good," he heard Bo Diare mutter.



A FEW hours later, Doucet arrived. He was tall and thin. His face was clean-shaven, and he did look like a monk, a fighting monk, such as went forth to battle in the old days, wielding a mace; for the Church scorns the sword. His gray eyes, set wide of his thin nose, smoldered in anger. His lips were tense. Peller, speechless, brought his hand to the brim of his helmet and waited. Doucet, mechanically answering his salute, spoke sharply.

"Why this butchery?"

"I was attacked, sir."

"The natives never attack without reason."

"They had a reason, major. But I was not the direct cause of their resentment. Tari will bear me out that I fired only in self-protection. And I lost one man killed, one wounded."

"That does not justify you. The natives ask nothing better than to live at peace with the white men. I utterly disapprove of your conduct."

"I regret—" Peller offered.

"Enough!" Doucet interrupted. "What are you doing here?"

Peller briefly explained the loss of his rifles.

"I stayed on with the permission of Captain Carlotti, of your own army, who declined my offer to surrender."

"Carlotti is a bandit."

"So I now surmise. But until this morning I had seen nothing to indicate that he was not acting in official capacity. His brutality toward the fisher-folk caused the attack on me."

"I am commissioned to put an end to such practise. The killing of childish, docile natives has gone on too long!"

"Childish, yes!" mentally agreed Peller. "But scarcely docile." But he wisely kept silent.

"I'm afraid things will be unpleasant for you when your government is informed," Doucet added.

"Captain Carlotti brought me to this village, and I cannot be held responsible for anything save the original fault of landing on Belgian ground."

"We'll see," Doucet replied shortly.

A short distance away Bo Diare was renewing the bandage on his wound, preparing an herb poultice. Doucet turned and looked at him.

"What's your man doing?" he asked.

"Preparing a healing salve of some sort."

"And does it heal?" the major asked.

"Yes, very swiftly."

"I wonder, I wonder—" the Belgian mused.

He stepped to Bo Diare's side and asked questions. Then he drew out a notebook and scribbled.

He glanced up as Peller approached.

"Very curious," he said. His former resentment had vanished. "I make an intensive study of botany," he explained. "Your man, here, knows much about native plants."

"He was somewhat of a sorcerer in his own tribe," Peller assured Doucet, "and should know."

"I did not know *Nere* leaves possessed healing virtue," the major said pensively. "Yes, I wonder—"

Peller understood. Doucet was neither a professional soldier, nor an inspired monk. He was a scholar. His was the scientist's anger at disregarded theories.

Peller, tactfully, fed him an occasional question, and then appeared to be deeply interested in the explanation. He nodded and looked impressed when Doucet triumphantly proved a point, and shook his head in sympathy when the major denounced the stupidity of the average authority on botanics.

Peller accompanied the major on an excursion into the forest. Doucet stopped before a gigantic Baobab-tree with an exclamation of pleasure. He took various views with his camera.

"A magnificent specimen," he informed Peller. "Especially this far south."

Peller glanced at the tree.

"There's one like it, some miles upstream from here, bigger than this one, I believe!" he said enthusiastically. "But it has this curious feature, the branches have curved over, and have taken root in the ground, forming arches."

Doucet stared.

"A Baobab, *Adansonia Digitata*, with limbs that sink into the ground!"

"The leaves are like those of the Baobab, I'll swear!"

"Impossible!"

"Quite likely I am mistaken."

Doucet held his chin, paced to and fro. Presently he suggested that they go back to the village for lunch.

But he was thoughtful and silent.

Later, Peller succeeded in shifting the conversation to a more interesting topic.

"I have been assigned to the investigation of officials," Doucet explained. "I am engrossed in the welfare of the people, and the abuses to which they have been subjected. Carlotti is a remnant of the past. When he first came here, his methods were all right, or so considered. He did not change with the times. Two months ago, he extorted money and produce from the natives. He also executed several blacks. I am after him. I intended to get canoes here, but he has taken everything. The few I could gather along the river are too small for my purpose and would scatter my forces."

"What do you think he plans to do?"

"He will attempt to gain the Bahr el Ghazal."

"Then you don't think he would cross to French territory."

"No. From the Bahr el Ghazal, he could reach the Oriental Coast, and ship from

there to Italy. He has gathered much during his years here. However, Tari should be here soon with reports. He'll let me know in which direction Carlotti is headed. I'll follow him until all possibility of capture or of his return to Belgian Congo is over."

"And I am to follow you?"

"For the present, yes."

Doucet returned once more to the subject that interested him most.

"Where did you say that tree was?" he asked.

"Nine or ten miles."

"On the French shore?"

"Yes."

"Too bad, too bad. I would want a few photographs, a sketch, specimens of leaves."

"You have my permission to take them," Peller assured him.

"Ah, but I don't know where it is! And if I take you on French soil you will be free. Yes, I must forget it," Doucet asserted.

Not long after, Doucet was informed that Carlotti had stopped a short distance up-stream, and camped on the French bank. He was stopping all canoes bound for Tari's village. Tari's scouts gathered from the natives that the white man was having trouble with his men. Peller was not surprised. As soon as it became evident that Carlotti had lost support of other white men, his troopers would rebel, might even refuse to accompany him farther, unless he paid exorbitant prices for their services. Or again, Carlotti might be wishing to cut down his force to a half-dozen men. He would then have trouble in selecting them from among the thirty odd he had with him.

He suggested this to Doucet.

"That's right," Doucet agreed. "His men are his own. They never were properly enrolled, and have no discipline, save that of any band of partisans."

"And he is on French soil."

Doucet nodded.

"Suppose we make the following agreement. I get Carlotti for you, you let me go. What do you think?"

"I will not arrange anything irregular," Doucet said decidedly. "Your suggestion is extraordinary."

Peller indicated the village, the staring natives, the looming trees.

"And is all that ordinary?"

"No. But one should keep up the ways of white men," Doucet concluded.



THAT night found them camping several miles from Tari's village, up-stream. Across the way, the reflection of Carlotti's fires trembled on the stream. Doucet had stated that he intended to follow parallel to the Italian's line of march, in the hope that the captain would make a false move that would result in his capture.

Throughout the night, Doucet's sentries were on the lookout, and Peller, followed by Bo Diare, made short trips up and down the shore. The sergeant thought a French party might pass by, as he had probably been reported missing at both outposts. But nothing came. At dawn a canoe was seized by Doucet's men, bringing down a cargo of fish for Tari's village, the paddlers having crowded the Belgian shore in the darkness to avoid Carlotti, whose seizure of the canoes had become known within the brief delay.

Peller regarded the craft. It was too small to carry his men and himself. And before he could gain the far side, the fire of the Belgians would take effect. Peller knew that a casualty among his *tirailleurs* would tell heavily against him. Doucet came down to examine the canoe. He appeared perturbed, undecided. Peller immediately surmised the reason for his interest.

The sergeant gave Bo Diare a few curt instructions. Bo Diare nodded.

The Belgian came to Peller's side.

"I've been thinking—" he began.

"Decided to let me go?" Peller asked.

"No, no!" the other returned impatiently.

"Are you sure about the Baobab?"

"What Baobab?" Peller inquired.

"The Baobab you spoke about yesterday."

"Oh, yes, I remember. Bo Diare, here, saw it also. He agrees that it is a Baobab, though peculiar."

"May I ask him? Not that I doubt. But you understand—"

"Of course."

Bo Diare, questioned, replied as eloquently as his French would allow, illustrated with broad gestures, the curving branches of the trees, the limbs taking root in the soil.

"I see one like that before," he added. "Near Sokolo."

"How long would it take me to reach it, should I go?" Doucet asked.

"Two, at the most, three hours. But is it safe, with Carlotti on the far shore?" Peller asked.

"His men are gathered. They probably are afraid to go too far inland."

Doucet pondered.

"If I went without weapons, as a scientist, with your men, wouldn't it be all right?" he suggested.

Peller shrugged.

"I can not prevent you, although I am strongly against it. After all, the tree may not be a Baobab."

This but excited Doucet's interest.

"But if it were, with this curious formation!"

"What's so interesting in a crooked tree?" Peller asked.

"I admit it has no specific value. But I would like a photograph." The major smiled in embarrassment. His inner conflict was evident. "I'll take a chance if you'll give me your parole."

"Given, major. In any case, I could do nothing against all your men."

"I—I won't inform them of my errand," Doucet explained lamely. "If I can take Bo Diare—"

"Certainly."

"I have your parole?"

"I will not move without your permission."

Doucet glanced at the canoe.

"It can hold four men; your corporal, myself and two paddlers," he said. "That's all I need. I'll get my camera and notebook."

He was about to leave, but on second thoughts turned to Bo Diare and requested him to come with him. Bo Diare followed obediently.

Soon Doucet returned with his men.

"Better keep close to shore until out of Carlotti's sight," Peller advised. "Bo Diare, take care of the major."

"Yassah!"

The canoe slid off into the shade of the overhanging mangroves.



IN TWO hours, the canoe was back, with the two paddlers and a note from Major Doucet.

Peller smiled as he read the Belgian's indignant protest. The carefully prepared bait had worked. Doucet was Bo Diare's

captive, on the French side. From the first, Peller had known the plan was possible. He had at one time commanded the escort of two professors on a tour in the Sudan. In spite of his uniform, Doucet was of the same breed. The thought of a peculiar tree, or a peculiar bug, would send him on a wild-goose chase. The passion for botany was the weak point in Doucet's armor.

At the risk of capsizing the craft, Peller loaded himself and the five *tirailleurs*, bade good-by to the astonished Belgian troopers, and made the crossing safely. On the bank, three miles above Carlotti's camp, he found Bo Diare and the major. The Ouolof was seated on the sand, his rifle at hand. The Belgian walked about nervously.

"An ungentlemanly trick!" he greeted the sergeant.

"Necessity is the mother of invention, sir."

"And you have broken your parole!"

"Not at all! You requested me to come and free you."

"That's a technicality to excuse a false promise."

Peller apologized for his apparently questionable conduct.

"Is that what you call a Baobab?"

Doucet asked wrathfully pointing to a medium-sized tree, the limbs of which had taken root in the ground.

"Yes," Peller said.

"Why, that's nothing more or less than a Sausage-Tree!"

The major seemed more infuriated at his failure to find the phenomenal Baobab than at Peller's trickery.

"I could have photographed hundreds on the Belgian shore!"

He drew a deep breath and then went on in exasperation—

"I suppose now you are going to take me to Bakkasu?"

"No, major," Peller replied. "But I'm afraid I have assigned you to a very unpleasant task. There's no one here to take you back. You'll have to paddle, yourself."

Doucet went to the canoe, and, with surprising strength lifted it, and pushed it into the water. Then he stepped over the stern, and pushed off. The current would help him. He should make his camp without difficulty.

Peller waded in and offered his hand.

Doucet hesitated for a brief moment, then offered his in return.

"You must think me a fool," he remarked.

"Not at all!" Peller declared. "The beginning of this affair was my unfortunate hunting-trip. Down here, where there are so few pleasures, our hobbies become our passions."

"That's right. Good-by, sergeant, and good luck!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Clumsily, Doucet paddled away.



"WHO can swim?" Peller asked.

Night had fallen. They had remained on the spot where the Belgian had landed. Peller had not given up the thought of regaining his rifles.

The soldiers held a brief consultation.

"I swim," said Bo Diare.

"I—" chimed in Yatera.

Another of the six also answered in the affirmative.

The others had been born far from rivers and could not swim a stroke.

"I want a man who can swim far," Peller added. "Yatera, you're out. Your wounds have not healed, and the dirty water would be none too good for them. What about you, Bo Diare?"

Bo Diare declared his willingness to attempt anything, but added that, in the water, he tired quickly. However, his *gris gris* would see him through.

The third man, Famba, as tall as Bo Diare, but more muscular, possessed of long, strong limbs, and a barrel-like chest, told Peller that he had been a fisherman on the Senegal Coast at one time, and could swim all day and all night. Peller did not suspect him of exaggeration. He had seen a Coast native swim several miles out to sea to carry a message to a ship, holding the letter aloft in a split stick. The paper when delivered had been dry.

"Strip, Famba," he ordered.

Famba, bared to the skin, kept only his red *chechia* on the top of his round head. Peller drew off shoes and leggings, then trousers and socks, pulled the shirt over his head; the flannel belt about his stomach, which served as underwear, followed.

"Bo Diare, I need a pair of sandals."

Bo Diare handed over his own, solid leather soles, fastened to the feet by a strap over the big toe. Peller tied them

around his neck by a leather thong. Then he gave his orders.

"Bo Diare, lead the men down-stream to the captain's camp. When Famba calls out, shoot. But not at the white man. Leave him to me. When the soldiers come into the bush after you, go back slowly. Don't risk losing any men."

"What you go do?" Bo Diare asked.

"Famba and I will swim down."

"There be crocodile!" the corporal warned.

"I hear a lot about them. But I never saw any one hurt."

"But I see——"

"Never mind, Bo Diare. Do as you're told."

Bo Diare mumbled.

"What about you, Famba; are you afraid of crocodile?"

"Yassah."

"Then I'll go alone."

"You go, I go," Famba said.

"It's dark enough now," Peller said.

"You can start, Bo Diare."

The Oulof looked at the white man, shook his head in dismay, but left immediately. Famba had given his rifle and pack to one of his comrades. The corporal had taken Peller's.

Peller handed Famba his revolver.

"Can you hold this above water?" he asked.

"Yassah."

"Then let's go."

And he led the way into the Ubangi. The water was lukewarm and not unpleasant. Peller swam ahead, keeping fairly near shore. Whether it is true, as some claim, that crocodiles do not attack living men, whether luck served Peller, or whether the saurians who usually inhabited that section of the Ubangi were occupied elsewhere—at any rate, the swim was without accident. The Frenchman was well-aware that he took a great risk, but the element of surprise was needed, and this the only way in which he could accomplish his end.

Hours seemed to go by before the two swimmers reached the edge of the sand-bank, close to Carlotti's camp. Peller put on the sandals, and took his revolver.

"Call out," he ordered.

Famba gave the cry of a night-bird, as agreed upon by Diare and himself. A pause. Then Famba called again.

But one man was awake in the Italian's

camp, a sentry, who squatted in the center of the sleeping men, a rifle in his hands. At the first shot, he sank, a victim of Bo Diare's accurate aim. More shots, and the camp was astir. The bewildered men hesitated. Carlotti's voice could be heard, directing them into the bush. The moment of danger found the soldiers looking to him for orders. The canoe men and bearers, who knew they were not supposed to take part in the action, crouched on the sand.

The armed men disappeared into the bush, answering the *tirailleurs'* fusillade as they went. Carlotti remained by the fires, standing fearlessly, although he did not know that he was in no danger. Peller found time to admire his courage. But not for long.

He stepped forward into the circle of light. The bearers and paddlers saw him, but did not cry out, struck speechless by the sudden appearance of a naked white man. Carlotti stood with his back to the sergeant, looking into the bush. Peller, at his elbow, with his revolver ready, spoke—"Sorry, captain."

Carlotti started violently, and turned. He smiled.

"Well done," he said, and dropped his pistol, casually reaching down for his shirt and tunic.

"Call your men back," Peller ordered.

Carlotti drew his whistle and obeyed. Bo Diare and his men ceased firing, but remained in hiding.

"Get your men off, canoe by canoe. You can take all your stuff, but leave my rifles," Peller went on.

Carlotti gave orders. The first canoe was launched, then the others, until there remained only the last.

"You may go, captain," Peller concluded. "Straight across to the other side. But remember that you are covered, by rifles as well as my revolver."

Carlotti walked toward the canoe, which was already manned. Before getting in, he turned.

"Well done," he repeated.

The paddlers pushed the craft free.

Peller looked at the bundles containing the rifles.

"Now, to explain all this," he thought.

Firing broke out from the Belgian shore. Shouted conversation came brokenly across the water.

Carlotti was discussing his surrender.



CAPTAIN MONGE tilted his chair back and ran his brown fingers through his tangled black hair.

"I've been worried about you," he said. "I'm glad to see you back. And you say you were delayed by your paddlers' desertion down-river?"

"Yes, captain."

Monge tapped his pencil on the table. Then he went on—

"And you could not find canoes and paddlers until two days ago?"

"No, captain."

"You were by the shore all that time?"

"No. You see I made several trips inland to attempt to find men."

"That accounts for Samake and his men not finding you!" Monge said. "The corporal went down some fifty miles, and came back saying that you were not to be found. Reported a great deal of palaver in the native villages. Even claimed that there was a strange white man, with many followers, camped on our side."

He paused, then added—

"While you were inland looking for boatmen, you hid the rifles?"

"Yes, captain."

"That accounts for the dilapidated condition of the bundles," Monge remarked.

He drew a glass forward, filled it and offered Peller the drink.

The sergeant looked guiltily about him at the walls of Captain Monge's bungalow, at the compound outside. Suddenly, he became disgusted at himself, disgusted at his deceit. He blurted out the whole story, omitting nothing. Monge heard him in silence.

"I suppose you are aware this precludes any thought of promotion," he said when Peller finished.

"Yes, captain."

Monge got up and paced back and forth, his hands in his pockets, his brow knit.

"That's a fine performance, sergeant. Wonderful!" he said in withering sarcasm. "All in all, about a dozen men killed in neutral territory, and twice that number wounded!"

Peller perspired with humiliation, but did not reply. He, too, had risen, and stood still under the storm of scorn from his superior.

"A little thing like the breach of neu-

trality, after the recent episodes that have made relations tense, that's nothing! Sergeant Peller must have his little hunt, his little hippo, eh?"

Monge came closer to Peller, then suddenly relaxed into a grin, slammed his hand on the sergeant's shoulder.

"You lucky fool!" he said.

Peller regarded him blankly.

"Do you think the Ubangi is still a desert?" Monge asked. "Samake, on his way back, met with Major Doucet, who wrote me a letter. That was after all your stunts when you really were looking for paddlers. I know about the trick of the tree. I had Samake question Bo Diare. I know all about the little swim, too. I don't know whether you should be shot or decorated!"

Peller overjoyed, for he saw that things, were breaking his way; and that, the chief smiling, leniency was certain, gulped the drink on the table.

"There are two things needed for a man to succeed in a military career, initiative and luck," said Monge. "You have too much initiative, and a passable amount of luck. When I passed my examination for my commission, Peller, one of my friends was asked for the definition of 'initiative.' He was flustered, had forgotten the textbook answer. He replied: 'Initiative is disobedience that turns out for the best.' And he had it right! After all, Carlotti was a criminal, his men were little better. And you drove him right into Doucet's arms. But Heaven help you if you try anything like that again!"

Peller thought of his luck, of his commission, now certain, and went outside and gave Bo Diare and his fellows enough money to celebrate.

Initiative and luck—if luck only held!

The Oulof corporal, who stood with the Bambara *tirailleur*, Tiebe Samake, he who had searched for Peller's detachment on the river, accepted the offer of silver pieces. Peller, walking away, heard a brief conversation.

"*Toubab*—white man—he be good to *tirailleur* and he no fear crocodile," Bo Diare remarked.

Tiebe Samake, who had at one time served under Peller, replied—

"It be white man's way."

Carstairs Plays a Hunch



By
Magda Leigh

Author of "Not A Gentleman's Job."

WHEN Hugh Carstairs decided he would continue from Haiti as second mate of the *S. S. Balandra Head* rather than travel home as passenger on a mail-boat, he went a step further along life than he, himself, realized. In fact, his decision started the Fates weaving some queer threads in his destiny.

Just now, he was impatient to be up and to join his ship. Convalescing from the fever which had attacked him on the trip south seemed a slow, stupid business. Too, Hugh resented the two days he had been down-and-out. His last recollection on that trip south was his clinging for support to the iron ladder in the stifling engine-room, holding a would-be mutinous, black gang below with a gun. He had fallen unconscious to the floor and thus missed the sight of cocky little Captain Merriweather descending that ladder just in time to check a mad rush for the deck and the boats. Hugh had wanted to watch that drama to completion, to see the crew subdued and the old steamer brought into port.

It galled him to come to, in bed, and to find himself in a little hillside shack in Port Plata, amidst the odors of sweet jasmine and pungent guava, away from the harsh ship sounds to which he was accus-

tomed, away from his baking, smelly, but familiar room.

Captain Merriweather had rented this hillside hut from a native he knew, and had had Hugh brought here where he might have cool and quiet. Quiet? It seemed to Hugh nothing could ever again sound so persistently in his ears as the croaking of frogs, the scuttling of lizards and the swishing of palm-fronds in the profound stillness of the tropical night. The days were bad enough, but during them the heat made him drowsy, and he dozed the hours away. But the nights were interminable.

Now and again a deep oath proceeded from the opposite side of the room where Faney, chief mate of the *Balandra Head*, tossed sleeplessly on a cot. Faney, too, missed his natural surroundings. At such moments Carstairs softly cursed the well-meaning little skipper, who was now standing the brunt of the work aboard the ship, so his mate could nurse back to health Carstairs, himself.

Faney had assured Hugh that the skipper had picked up two good men to stand by until his mates were able to rejoin him. Perhaps, too, Carstairs comforted himself, the Old Man considered Faney safer up in the shack away from the possibility of getting hootch. Carstairs grunted over this idea. If it hadn't been for Faney's hootch and his consequent falling asleep while on

"Carstairs Plays a Hunch," copyright, 1924, by Magda Leigh.

watch, the *Balandra Head* would not have gone off her course and scraped herself raw on a reef, and she wouldn't now be laid up in Port Plata getting herself temporarily patched up.

Youth and a clean life helped Carstairs to a quick recovery, and he and Faney were soon back aboard their ship. Even his little, suffocating quarters looked good to Hugh, as he poked about to see that his possessions hadn't been touched. He went over the ship like a woman returned to her home after an enforced absence.

He looked about him thoughtfully. Funny how he'd come to love the old tub! She was a hideosity—antique, dirty, paintless, shapeless. Yet Hugh felt a warm glow of affection for her as he walked about her decks and finally came to a pause at the rail. She was like her skipper: little, cocky and valiant.

Seafaring had never so fascinated Hugh during his service in the White Fleet. Life had been too tame there, entirely too polished. This new experience, during which he had tasted his first actual adventure in that mixture of mutiny and hurricane—this had been real stuff! Hugh chuckled at the remembrance of it.

As he leaned against the rail his thoughts wandered to the prodigal's return ahead of him. Hang being a rich man's son, with a fortune at his disposal and a parental injunction to "think of business!" This business of going to sea suited Hugh. It beat fortunes and investments.

At this point in his moody cogitations, Carstairs sighted Captain Merriweather bearing down upon him. There was an expression of anxiety on the little skipper's face and a peculiarly heavy drag to his walk.

"He's getting old!" Hugh murmured to himself. "And he knows the *Balandra Head* has grown old ahead of him! If anything happens to her, I suppose he's done!"

Captain Merriweather came to a stop at Carstairs' side, his elbow almost touching Hugh's as he leaned on the rail, alongside.

"Worrying about the *Balandra Head*, sir?" Hugh asked, after a long silence.

"Worryin'? —, no! Why'd I worry about her? She's a good ship!" Merriweather exploded.

But the drawn lines about his mouth did not relax.

"It's only spitting distance to Porto Rico

and dry dock, anyway," Hugh remarked, consolingly. "We'll soon be patched up and on our way."

"Ain't no dry dock in Porty Ricky," Captain Merriweather grunted. "They's a floatin'-dock at Porty Prince, an' as we gotta pick up cargo round that side of the island, we'll attend to our doctorin' there."

Carstairs lifted his eyebrows, but he refrained from comment on the change of plans.

"Any cargo here, sir?" he asked.

"Hides."

The Old Man shot out the single word and then glared at his second mate.

"You needn't to bother with 'em," the skipper went on, as Hugh made no response. "I'll attend to 'em. Want you to rest up as much as you can. You ain't altogether loose o' your fever, yet. An' we're not due any picnic excursion, headin' north."

"Rest up!" Carstairs snorted. "What d'you think I am? A débutante about to bud?"

Captain Merriweather blinked. "Day-bewtont" was a new flower to him. Now and then, the second mate did use fancy words!

"I'm still skipperin' this ship!" Merriweather snapped. "You'll do just as you're told, young feller!"

Carstairs grinned.

"Yes, sir!"

He glanced sideways at the troubled face.

"Didn't know there was any trade in this dump of a place," he remarked quizzically.

Captain Merriweather grunted.

"Lotsa things you don't know about Haiti," he retorted. "You and Mister Faney are here to help navigate my ship, not to know my business!"

"—!" Hugh breathed, as the skipper strode away. "The Old Man curses me and coddles me like a hen-pecking wife! Well, I'll manicure my nails in my boudoir while he nurses his cargo into its cradle below. I should lose my beauty sleep!"



THE next day, the temporary repairs being finished, loading was started.

Carstairs had gone to his room as ordered, but it was hot and he was restless. Finally he went out on deck. He walked aft where, to much racket, cargo was being lowered down Number Two hold.

"Cases!" Hugh exclaimed to himself. "Thought he said hides!"

He sauntered over to where Captain Merriweather was perspiringly swearing at the black winchman.

"More cargo, sir?" he questioned above the din.

Captain Merriweather wheeled about. When he saw that it was Carstairs, his face purpled.

"Get to your room!" he bellowed. "Thought I told you to turn in! Think I can't stow cargo? Get out!"

Carstairs, taken aback at the unreasonable fury in the Old Man's tone, stalked back to his room, turned on the fan and sat down to read. Still weak from fever, he soon grew drowsy and, sprawling on the settee, fell asleep. The sun was setting when he awoke. He had just time to bathe the perspiration from his streaming face, when the call sounded for mess.

Hugh went out on deck, lifted his nose to the light breeze that had sprung up, and darted forward.

"Some trade!" he gasped to Faney, as he took his seat opposite the mate at table. "Stench? I'll tell the cock-eyed world! Why hides? Why couldn't we have picked up coffee or cocoa or something that smelled appetizing?"

"They save the garden o' roses for the passenger-boats," Faney grinned.

"Some trade!" Carstairs repeated, but this time with a lilt in his voice. "I amused myself reading up the West Indies Pilot, Volume One, during my watch below today. It's great reading. Seems none of the lights around the benighted island are to be depended upon; the buoys may be in place, but more likely are not; the entire works is surrounded by reefs and rocks; and there are more wrecks than natural scenery to guide the wandering mariner on his way!"

Captain Merriweather glared at him over the rim of his coffee cup.

"Ain't too late to back out, young feller!" he snapped. "You know what happened comin' south. It's nothin' to what may happen goin' home. We got a crew picked up from the remains o' two o' them wrecks wot ain't yet been listed, an' I'm not praisin' 'em for any virtues. They's passenger boats calls here at Port Plata. If you're yearnin' for the comforts of a deck-chair back to Noo Yawk, you speak quick!"

Hugh's eyes twinkled as he gazed back

at the belligerent little skipper. Beneath the Old Man's bark was a note of anxiety.

"Not me!" Carstairs exclaimed. "Haven't I something—contraband or treasure down in Number Two hold, so precious you wouldn't trust me to load it? You gave me something to think about when you took on those mysterious cases in Port Plata!"

Captain Merriweather jerked upright in his seat. His eyes flamed.

"You shut your mouth!" he choked. "Wot I want known, I'll tell!"

Carstairs stared. The Old Man was growing crusty! Hugh shot a quick look at Faney, but that worthy was busily stowing away the last of his meal, his face expressionless, though active about the jaws.

Hugh soon left the table. Something—he couldn't name it—was poking about in his subconscious mind and fretting him. To be sure, the skipper had snapped and snarled at him all the way south, but here in Port Plata during his convalescence the Old Man had shown him unusual kindness.

"He's worrying about something!" Carstairs told himself, uneasily. "And it's no small thing, for that little runt would go through — fire with a chip on his shoulder and enjoy a bout with the — himself!"

It was late the next afternoon, when the *Balandra Head* received her clearance papers and got under weigh. Hugh had not yet seen the manifest, and so did not know what those cases in Number Two hold contained. He couldn't rid himself of the feeling that this consignment had something to do with the skipper's worry.

He stood at the rail and looked back at Port Plata. The town was an indefinite blur as the *Balandra Head* steamed slowly outward. Haiti depressed Hugh. The undependable lights and buoys; the wrecks; the tricky waters through which the ship was feeling her way—it was all of a kind.



THE *Balandra Head* made an uneventful trip around Haiti and finally came to rest off Port-au-Prince. Hugh was surprised to find that he was glad to go ashore. He had been so impatient to rejoin his ship, a while back, and now he found her changed. No, not the ship, but the atmosphere aboard her. The skipper was no longer funny to Carstairs. In fact, there was something so wrong with Captain Merriweather, that Hugh sensed impending tragedy.

"Half the time, he acts as if he wishes I'd quit her," Hugh soliloquized, as he made his way to the cable-office to send a message to his father, "and the rest of the time he acts as if he were scared to death I might!"

When Carstairs emerged again from the cable-office his manner was changed. He sauntered along, whistling, and his eyes shone. He had dreaded cabling his father he was about to return home and "think of business," until as he started to dig out his message, an inspirational line in the code-book caught his eye.

As he thought of his father's reading that message, now, he grinned, boyishly, disregarding the stares of two giggling Haitian girls who ogled him in passing. All was well with Hugh's world again.

The days dragged now until the *Balandra Head* was ready for sea. Faney found it beyond his powers of resistance to "keep off the hootch," and the crew in general took on as much as possible against their return to Mr. Volstead's country.

"Happy days!" Carstairs sighed as the little freighter started on her voyage home, every inch of space in her holds crammed with cargo. "If she doesn't fall to pieces right away we ought to have an interesting trip!"

Captain Merriweather, fresh lines about his face, was like an anxious mother with a sick child. He watched his ship. He listened to her. He went over her ceaselessly, on the alert for ailments.

To his evident surprise, she seemed to get along as well as ever. But he shook his head lugubriously.

"Don't think much o' them Haitian dock mechanics," he grumbled to Carstairs. "We're gonna cut corners and get to Noo Yawk as fast as ——'s hot!"

"Some speeder, this tub!" Hugh derided, under his breath.

Captain Merriweather glanced up at the second mate's face.

"You gonna quit her in Noo Yawk?"

"Think she'll ever get there?" Hugh grinned in reply.

To his amazement, the skipper did not rise to his bait. There was a new dignity to the Old Man as he replied, somberly—

"She's gotta, this trip!"

There was a long silence. Then the captain added, hesitatingly:

"'Course a young feller like you can get plenty o' berths on better ships than mine.

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But mebbe we'll get us a better ship some day soon—an' I ain't sayin' I won't be needin' a new mate, if Faney keeps on boozin'."

Carstairs shook his head.

"I like Faney, —— him! If he'd lay off the hootch, he'd be a good man."

"Well, if he don't, he'll be a gone man, that's what I'm sayin'!" the skipper snapped.

"I seen idjits like him before. They gets just so far and then they goes bugs! I've warned Faney—I ain't aimin' to have no more holes scraped in my ship while my mister mate takes a siesty on the bridge!"

"Did he bring aboard a supply in Haiti? But I don't need to ask!" Carstairs grunted.

"Well, here's hoping for a good trip, anyway, Sir!" he added, heartily, hoping to chase the gloom from Captain Merriweather's brow.



MUCH to the disgust of Mr. Belding, the new chief engineer picked up in Port Plata—his former ship lay, a wreck, on the edge of the shoal at the western side of the entrance to the port—the master of the *Balandra Head* insisted upon getting every bit of speed possible out of the old engines.

"She'll blow up or bust!" Belding despaired. "The darned junk-pile below won't stand much strain."

"She's gotta!" the skipper replied somberly.

And to every protest uttered from any quarter of his ship, he repeated doggedly—"She's gotta!"

Carstairs shrugged his shoulders over it all. As the old ship crawled up the latitudes, there were many things to occupy the second mate's mind. Faney was one of them. On the trip south Faney's drinking had caused Carstairs and the skipper to do double duty. Carstairs, swept by a combination of fever and anger, had found Faney's liquor, finally, and had sent it over the side. He made up his mind to do the same thing now. But finding it was no easy matter, for the mate had hidden it well.

The *Balandra Head*, for reasons known only to her owner and master, carried an extra life-boat. This boat was never used. It was in this, beneath the covering tarpaulin, that Hugh at last located Faney's supply of trouble. He promptly sent it overboard and then sought the mate.

Faney lay in his berth, heavy with liquor. He gazed insolently at Carstairs, as the second mate entered.

"Comin' snoopin', my young hero?" he leered. "It isn't so easy to get at, this time!"

"You said it," Hugh replied, quietly. "It wasn't easy. But I managed, just the same. I've sent it to Davy Jones."

Faney struggled out of the berth and stood staring into Hugh's face.

"Whadda ya mean?" he demanded.

"That spare boat was a good cache, but not good enough!" Hugh's hands clenched, as he spoke.

Faney eyed him. Though a bigger man, he was no match for the second mate, as he had learned on the trip south. For a moment he hesitated. Then he stepped back with an ugly laugh.

"Humph! Think you're real bright, don't you? Guess I'll have to treat you to a surprise!"

"If there's more of the stuff aboard, I'll find it," Hugh replied, quietly. "Faney, for — sake, man, buck up! You can't keep this sort of thing going. Even Captain Merriweather's had a bellyful of you. You'll land on the beach. You're a chief officer. Doesn't that mean anything to you? You'd be skipper in a while, if you'd cut the hootch."

"Here endeth the first lesson!" Faney sneered, as Hugh paused. "To — with seafarin'! I guess I can manage my own affairs, you dude!"

Carstairs shrugged disgustedly.

"I'll find your booze, if you have more, and I'll send it to the mermaids, same as the other. And if I have to, Faney, I'll beat more guts into you, as I did coming south."

Faney's eyes smoldered.

"It'll take more strength than your pretty hands has, to dig out the hootch I'll get if I want it! You better run along and amuse the Old Man. You and him seems to be right chummy! And you tell the Old Man for me that I get booze when I want it! He'll know what I mean."

Faney's face twitched and he moistened his lips.

"He was right clever to bury it so deep, but a word to that gang o' thirsty hellions we picked up in Port Plata, and out'll come everything that lays atop o' them cases!"

Carstairs started. Faney noted this and smiled evilly.

"Yeh, you and your precious skipper! He c'd play his little tricks on you while you amused yourself readin' romances about Haiti! But I wasn't tucked in my little bed, gettin' no beauty sleep, while we wuz loadin' them cases in Port Plata!"

Faney laughed, drunkenly.

"Notice you ain't seen no manifest yet, you young cockleorum? No—the Old Man's afraid you'll wonder why them cases ain't listed reg'lar! Some explainin' he'll be needin' to do! And some all-fired clever work to get them cases out in Noo Yawk!"

Carstairs gazed blankly at the mate a moment, then wheeled sharply and left the room.

Captain Merriweather was leaning gloomily on the bridge rail when Carstairs joined him. He glanced up at his second mate, then straightened suddenly. A look of something akin to panic flew into his red eyes.

"Those cases in Number Two hold, sir," Hugh said, thickly. "They aren't down on the manifest. What about them?"

Captain Merriweather struggled for a moment before he answered to regain his composure.

"Who's ship is this?" he finally asked, hoarsely.

"Yours! The dirty, stinking thing!"

"Then wot in — business is it o' yours to question my cargo?"

Carstairs gazed down at the skipper's distorted face. A dozen wild replies tripped to his tongue, but a sudden heart-sickness swept over him and silenced them. He and Merriweather stared at each other a moment. Then Hugh said, with a queer break in his voice—

"I knew your ship was dirty, but I thought you were clean!"

He flung away from the skipper and went below to his room.



LIFE aboard the *Balandra Head* had become a thing of misery.

Faney went about his duties muttering, and plainly desperate for drink. Captain Merriweather avoided Carstairs as much as possible. He ate his meals in his room and kept off to himself. Hugh, having discovered clay feet on his little idol, yearned for New York and release. His hurt was deeper than anything he had ever experienced in his life before.

The ship was making her way across the

latitudes and, as Captain Merriweather had expressed it, was "cutting corners" to save time. It seemed to Hugh the Old Man was taking unnecessary chances in keeping so far to westward and the Bahama Banks. But Carstairs was beyond questioning the Old Man. There was big money in running hooch, and evidently the Old Man had some plan for getting his precious cases into New York. Carstairs spat disgustedly at the thought.

The tail end of a hurricane came upon them, unexpectedly, one night. It served to shake Carstairs out of his mental lethargy. It also served to put an edge on the tempers of the crew shipped in Port Plata. For two days the old ship battled through wind and seas, her miserable engines sobbing at the strain of moving her. Belding, completely loathing the "pile of junk" under his care, drove his department savagely. On deck matters were even worse. The entire deck force was herded about by the frenzied skipper, who trusted the bridge to his mates while he, as Faney put it, "kept the — wreck from busting up." The bo's'n, a hard-boiled Hoboken product, almost wept from rage and exhaustion.

"Every time the — ship falls to pieces, he makes us stick her together again!" he yammered to Faney, when they met on deck the second day.

"Never mind! She'll just naturally bust up!" Faney replied hoarsely, his tongue wetting his lips. "If we come through this sweet weather, we'll have some refreshments if we have to turn her upside down and shake them cases outa her!"

They came through. The third morning broke thick, but the wind had gone down and the sea moderated. A lowering, leaden sky hung over the *Balandra Head*. About her was a terrific desolation of sullen waters.

Carstairs, afraid to trust Faney long on the bridge, had stood seemingly endless watches. When the haggard skipper came to relieve him finally, Hugh staggered into the chart-room, fell upon the settee and slept.

It seemed to him he had just gone to sleep, though it was really hours later, when he felt himself rudely shaken. He opened his eyes painfully.

"Ship in distress, off the starb'rd bow, sir!"

The words reached Hugh's dulled senses. He compelled his protesting body to move. A seaman stood by him.

"Ship in distress off the starb'rd bow!" the man repeated.

Carstairs staggered to his feet and went to the bridge, where he found Captain Merriweather staring to starboard through glazed eyes.

Off the bow lay a dismayed schooner. She sat deep in the water and rose sluggishly to the seas. There was no need for the jury-mast with its fluttering signal for help. She was only too evidently in urgent need.



"TROUBLE, eh?" Hugh grunted in the skipper's ear.

"Salvage!"

Merriweather's voice was a hoarse whisper. His shoulders drooped; his entire body sagged downward from weariness.

"We'll take off her crew and then take her in tow," the skipper added in a croak.

"You're crazy!" Hugh snapped. "The *Balandra Head* can barely get herself through the water as it is! You can take off her crew, but —"

"You teachin' me my business, you young bantam?" Captain Merriweather suddenly bellowed. "We'll tow her to Nassau. She'll probably float that far."

"Runnin' hooch ain't enough for Captain 'Get-Rich-Quick' Merriweather! Salvage, now, by —!" Faney's voice broke in.

Carstairs glanced up impatiently into the mate's face. Then he turned resolutely back to the skipper.

"Captain Merriweather, you'll lose your own ship, if you attempt any such madness," he protested.

For a moment, the skipper's eyes blazed, but suddenly the gleam in them died down.

"You think she can't make it?" he asked with amazing meekness.

"I know she can't! The chief says her engine-room's almost falling to pieces between his hands."

"We'll signal them an' take off her crew." There was a note of weary resignation in Captain Merriweather's voice.

But the captain of the dismayed schooner was a hard-headed Swede, and across the waters, he signaled his determination to stick to his ship.

"That lets you out!" Hugh exclaimed. "Your ship couldn't tow a raft right now!"

"An' wot would you advise?"

There was an oily politeness in Merriweather's tone.

"Why, if they won't abandon her, kiss 'em

good-by. Some one else'll come along and tow 'em in!" Hugh retorted impatiently.

"You're young!" the skipper grunted. "Me—I ain't used to leavin' folks to possible drownin'. We'll tow 'em as far as we can go."

"We'll go down!" Carstairs snapped.

"Mebbe we will!" Captain Merriweather remarked gently. "Mebbe we will. But we'll be reg'lar seamen before we die!"

The color swept into Carstairs's face. Suddenly he drew himself erect. He smiled affectionately down into the little skipper's eyes.

"Not much clay feet, after all!" he remarked cryptically.

He looked over at the unbeautiful thing that lay abeam, wallowing in the heavy swells.

"What's the orders of the day, sir?" he asked boyishly.



THE work of maneuvering the *Balandra Head* into position was a tedious, gruelling affair. The work of making fast the towing line was even more gruelling. Hours that seemed like days were spent in the accomplishment, and the end was something reached after men seemed to have grown old in the effort.

Carstairs staggered exhaustedly about the task. Now and again he was swept by a quick chill, and now and again he burned hot with fever. Yet, he it was who stood over the rebellious men, pistol in hand, driving them to the duty they swore they would not perform. The *Balandra Head* couldn't do it! They were — if they'd try to make her. Carstairs was obdurate. Perhaps more than the deadly menace of that revolver was the threat in his eye.

Time rolled away in a sort of nightmare as he threatened, bullied, beat his men to their task. He lived a hundred lives before it was accomplished and dodged a hundred deaths as the old steamer rolled deep and shipped sudden vicious seas. At last it was done, and he and his men had fastened an old man of the sea to their ship!

Two to three knots! And Captain Merriweather had boasted of cutting corners! The *Balandra Head* crawled—hesitated—took breath and crawled again. Her engines sobbed and choked, and throughout her was an endless groaning. The ungainly thing astern yawed and made life aboard the steamer a worse thing to endure.

The skipper had an eye on the glass and one on the sea. Even a squall, now, would mean—

"It mustn't happen!" Carstairs protested, gulping hard.

He wanted to see the skipper win. It had been a plucky fight. But the sea was rising again, and again the glass was falling.

"We may get only a little blow—but even a little blow—"

Carstairs' jaws snapped shut.

As the hours passed the wind increased and the rain beat down upon the laboring steamer and her rebellious tow. The *Balandra Head* barely made headway with her burden. She headed up to the seas, to be beaten, smothered, deluged, by them. The yawing ship, astern, worked to her quarter and began to roll dangerously.

Merriweather gave some quick, sharp orders. The crew had become strangely quiescent. This was a man in command, a man to whom shooting meant nothing, if orders were not obeyed. Chocking, fighting for their very lives in the waters that flung themselves upon the *Balandra Head*, they managed to shift the hawsers from the towing bitts aft, and bring them in through the bow-chocks.

Merriweather shouted down through the tube to the engine room. His words were few. The *Balandra Head's* engines were shut down and the steamer rode to the tow as sea-anchor.

Men, harassed and spent, dumbly went about the task of pouring oil upon the seas. Slowly, carefully they let the oil run out. They were holding an ocean in check!



A STEAMER, bound south, had sighted them. She had wireless word of them to the coast guard cutter *Yamacraw* and that little vessel, happily not far away, sped toward them.

It was almost a question which ship most needed succor. The *Balandra Head*, however, was still able to get weigh on her, while the schooner was not. The cutter took the sailing ship in tow, bade a solemn farewell to the abject little steamer and before nightfall was out of sight.

Once more the *Balandra Head* was moving forward. That was the best that could be said for her. She was just moving.

"—a-mile!" Carstairs gasped as he leaned over the chart on the chart-room

table. "Why doesn't he put into the Bahamas? She's about done!"

If he agreed with this verdict, Captain Merriweather made no comment on the fact. But the crew, belligerent when the *Yamacraw* departed with the sailing-ship in tow, began to grow restive. There was no let-up in the work. The Old Man was a slave-driver, and his — ship would never fetch anywhere, unless it was the bottom of the Atlantic!

Faney, cogitating in his room over things in general, was seized with an inspiration.

"We're so — close to the Bahamas, I can smell the booze!" he chuckled to himself. "If that fool skipper and his precious second mate love this floating hearse so well, let 'em have her to themselves. Guess the men'll jump at the chance to clear out!"

He sauntered out on deck, beckoned to the cursing bo's'n and briefly laid bare his idea.

As Faney had had no liquor recently, Captain Merriweather had again trusted him to stand watch on the bridge. He had been forced to trust the mate, for Carstairs and the skipper, himself, were sadly in need of sleep. And when they finally slept, it was as if they had been drugged.

Hence it was that, during Faney's watch, at about five in the morning, the crew of the *Balandra Head*, under the clever guidance of the mate, eased the two boats overside and made what they considered their escape from a doomed ship. Only one man, besides the sleeping skipper and second mate, was left. This was Mr. Belding, who resignedly remained below, after refusing to join the deserters. He made no protest at their departure. His engines were at their last gasp, and he knew it. However, he'd stick with them. When Faney had approached him and laid bare the plans, Belding had eyed him contemptuously.

"You're the scum o' the earth!" he remarked simply. "Get to — outa my sight!"

The last of the deserters to leave was the man at the wheel. He had mockingly made sure the *Balandra Head* was on her course, had elaborately made the wheel fast, had swept it a flourishing courtesy and had joined his waiting companions.

Mr. Belding, below, gazed ruefully at the steam gauge. Then he sighed, shut down the engines and lighted a vile-smelling pipe.

The sudden quiet awakened both Cap-

tain Merriweather and his second mate. Carstairs, running out on deck, found the *Balandra Head* lying peacefully upon the waters, while the sun, a great golden ball, arose over the eastern horizon. Hugh had instinctively run toward the bridge ladder, and he went up it like a cat up a tree. At the top, he found Captain Merriweather dazed but dignified in a flannel night-shirt.

"They've gone," the skipper remarked quietly, making a comprehensive gesture toward the west where two small boats, manned by exuberant crews, were bound Bahama- and hooch-ward.

"The — skunks!" Hugh breathed.

Captain Merriweather shook his head.

"Dunno as I blame 'em," he said mildly. "Besides, Mister Faney was probably thirsty."

Hugh looked down at the ludicrous figure before him.

"What was the idea of the hootch-running, sir?" he asked, gently. "Do you need money?"

For a moment the Old Man's lips twitched and he swallowed hard. When he finally spoke his voice was unusually docile, and he had a look in his eyes as they met Hugh's, that reminded the latter of his dog at home.

"All my life," Captain Merriweather said slowly, "I been to sea in rotten ships. Seemed like I just didn't fit in nothin' else. I been sneerin' all them years at mail-boats an' fancy freighters, an' wishin' to — I could sail in either with decent men about me.

"Ain't never married. If I hadda, I'd ha' dreamed of a son like you."

He paused and again his lips twitched. When he could control them, he continued:

"I been savin' all them years, an' never rightly guessed what for till you come along. I was goin' to buy me one o' them fancy freighters, thinkin' mebbe you'd stick, as my mate. An' I got to figgerin' and to bein' afraid I wouldn't have quite enough money. So I kinda thought a big haul o' hooch would do the trick."

Carstairs' throat tightened. He felt suddenly infinitely smaller than the ridiculous little figure before him.

"Skipper," he said, softly, "in Port au Prince I cabled home to my dad."

"That you wus quittin'? I—I don't blame you!"

"Quitting, —!" Carstairs flushed, boyishly. "My dad's been piling up several fortunes ever since I was born, and he has handed over one or two of them to me to invest as I wished. I cabled him from Haiti that I was going into the shipping business. I—I had a hunch you'd enjoy something different from the *Balandra Head*. I know dad! He'll have combed the market by this time, and planned us a house-flag! And if you'll take command of the finest cargo-wallah I can buy, I'd—I'd like to go mate!"

Captain Merriweather gazed up into Hugh's honest eyes a moment. Then, as a mist seemed to rise between them, he felt Hugh's hand on his shoulder in a mighty grip.

"I'm going below and scout us up something to eat, sir!" Carstairs said, huskily, and fled before the skipper could speak.

Hugh found Belding in the mess-room, and together they whacked up a breakfast. Then the chief sought out the skipper, who

was adding the final touches to his dressing, and brought him below to eat.

Captain Merriweather finished his meal before the others and left them abruptly. Soon he rejoined them.

"The *Balandra Head's* settlin'," he announced, calmly. "We'll get that spare boat overside."

The two men followed him to the deck.

"There's a steamer bearing down on us!" Carstairs cried suddenly.

"I know it!" the Old Man grunted. "Seen her before I opened the sea-cocks."

Belding shot him a quizzical glance, but remarked, simply: "Then let's go. Those hides stink!"

"Tain't the hides," Captain Merriweather replied gently. "It's what's under 'em!"

He walked aft toward the spare boat. Carstairs, beside him, suddenly threw his arm affectionately over the little skipper's bent shoulders. It was the way he had always loved to walk beside his dad.

WHERE OLD FORT MANUEL ONCE STOOD—WATER

by Raymond W. Thorp

MANY who are acquainted with western history have read of Manuel Lisa. One of the earliest of French traders in the Northwest, Lisa had to keep on the alert most of the time against Indian attacks, and caused forts to be erected at several of his trading posts.

One of these, Old Fort Manuel, has become historical for the reason that it was named after him. It has now been discovered that this old fort and its site have been "eaten" away by the river and is now several hundred feet out in the stream. This fact has caused some concern among historians who have been unable to find any trace of the old fort when in search of it for data. At the time it was established it was thirty-five miles north of the point where the Grand River flows into the Missouri, at a point near the present boundary line between North and South Dakota.

The reader must bear in mind that there are two Grand River's which flow into the "Big Muddy," and the one mentioned is the upper Grand. The exact location of the historic old post has for a long time been a matter of dispute, but this has now been ended by the discoveries of a group of historical experts who have made an exhaustive search to end the controversy.

Early records show that when the old post was established it stood back from the edge of a high bluff one hundred or one hundred and fifty yards. The Missouri River, however, has been working on the bluff for centuries. Old Indian records stated that the bluff was being worn away by the swift waters of the river at the rate of "two steps" a year. "Two steps" is about six feet, according to white men's measurements, which would bring the river back about two hundred yards since the post was established.

Riding Back



By
Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Taking Hold," "Through Fire," etc.

MR. ROLAND HAWTHORN, alias Tierail, despised sheep, tolerated cattle and worked, when he was inspired, on some horse-ranch or other. Like some poets and artists, he needed real inspiration if he was moved to toil. But with the mood in its full glory, no man ever had much edge on Tierail. He rode horses the way a canoe rides white water rapids. He sat a saddle the way a rogue cougar sits a tree-trunk over a deer runway. By his touch and his low, compelling voice he soothed the maddest sunfisher, and had even quieted a nervous wreck of horse-flesh down wind from a big cinnamon bear.

Mr. Roland Hawthorn—he was always listed that way on announcements of rodeos—had several faults of his own. They spoiled not only the high opinion with which people regarded him, but they hurt his own self-pride; unhappily, however, he felt powerless to overcome any of his bad habits. The list was so formidable that it did seem to a good many of the Red Desert inhabitants that he might have dispensed with some of his unforgivable evil ways.

He had a quick, mean temper toward humans. He had killed three men—dragging one with a lasso. If he loved a horse that belonged to some other man, he would steal it if he couldn't buy it. He would ride into town, and, having drunk too much strong liquor, would put his horse through performances that included taking it into

the leading hotel,* or to the railroad restaurant, or—on one memorable occasion—going into the Tabernacle of Saints and Missions. He killed one interrupting town marshal, and would have been hanged but for the fact that his temporary employer was a power in public opinion, as well as in the raising of horse-flesh. Tierail was just plumb careless.

As if these disturbances of the peace were not sufficient, he put himself in the way of suspicion of pestering sheep-herders. In fact, one night he brought suspicion on himself of having herded sheep at some time by coming into town with a hundred head of the woolies, which he sold. Now anybody who can drive sheep from horseback just has to know how. He needs experience. When, afterward, it was discovered that Tierail had actually stolen those sheep—well, people rejoiced when he was jailed for six months on the charge. He could have stolen cattle, which he probably did, and horses, which he surely did, without falling so low in public opinion. Incidentally, he associated with trifling members of the old Hole-in-the-Wall hangers on—mean waysiders, trifling trash.

But, come riding day, Mr. Roland Hawthorn actually could walk out of jail, without even his word of honor, to take part in the proceedings. The sheep-men, the cattle-men, the horsemen, whatever their personal ideas about one another, joined in allowing Tierail to ride—for the joy of mankind.

They wouldn't even send him to jail for thirty days, a week before a rodeo, except to be sure and have him sitting pretty, ready for the occasion. All were at pains to keep Tierail good-natured, lest he in a temper withdraw his name, *Mr. Roland Hawthorn*, from the large announcements of what was to take place—with no insurance as to what might actually happen on the dates specified.

Garden Gate, the settlement built at the sweet spring in the great pass through which one looks out of the mountains down into the vast, wind-worn, water-gashed, sage-freckled plains of the Red Desert, was in an exuberant mood. Cattle loss, grazing down those strong-grass slopes and areas, had been well below ten per cent. for several years. All hands were growing wealthy. Many were rich beyond their own dreams. They had staggered under burdens, till this Autumn when they could cash in on fat beef.

The desire to celebrate possessed the region long before the people realized what the emotion was. They had been carrying so much for so long that some thought they were still fighting on, when as a matter of fact, they had won through with the triumph of brave souls that never know when they are whipped, and to whom the thrill of victory is so rare, or unknown, that it comes unsuspected, unlooked for—as an exuberance of immeasurable joy. Some even regarded the delight of having won through, when it came, as a questionable heart-ache, something dubious, a hurt as it twisted through the unaccustomed playways of heart and soul.



OFF yonder, somewhere, was a horse whose fame reached Garden Gate. The reputation of Waltzing Jupiter spread across the Red Desert on account of his superlative wickedness. The year before Garden Gate discovered its wish to celebrate, Waltzing Jupiter was going to be carried, wilfully, to Rawlins to participate, and later to Cheyenne to edify in the big business of being happy and exercising in that prairie metropolis.

They started with Waltzing Jupiter from the Bird-Brand ranch. Five men brought him and nine other horses to the corral, and after some discussion it was decided to truck the bad horse down to the railroad, and ship him in a stall car with a passing rodeo outfit. They spent two days accus-

toming Waltzing Jupiter to the big truck, and then dragged him to the deck with ropes. They started with him for the hundred-mile drive over the ranch-country trail. At intervals, when the animal became nervous, they stopped to quiet him, soothingly. Twenty miles from the railroad he jumped over the side bars, landed running like an antelope, and returned whence he started in something like eight hours flat.

Waltzing Jupiter was bony at his best—long, lank, saw-range back and spur-knobbed over his hips.

"An' that hoss has so much nerve he naturally runs to ribs and hollow flanks!" riders remarked of his appearance, which was full of anxiety and cussedness.

He was yellow, with a rusty red tail and a red mane. A hue and shade difference would have made Waltzing Jupiter a California sorrel, beautiful to look upon, but despite the exuberance of his wonderful health, he was a sorry-looking horse at his liveliest, and his temper was mean and surly, full of treachery and ill-will—ungentled and proud of it.

The Bird-Brand boys determined to take their prize to Garden Gate, if they had to kill him to do it. They knew that the combination of this brute and Mr. Roland Hawthorn, alias Tierail, would be wonderfully fine to see, merely as an exhibition. Knowing both the horse and man, they wished those two scoundrel characters to meet. They performed a haying operation, on their way down to Garden Gate. They went out with jack-knives in the scrub and whittled off, with much back-breaking labor, several arms full of a low, slightly gummy, rather pretty posy-bearing crop of fodder. The posies were some of them white, some pale violet, and some rather pinkish. The feed was compressed into burlap bags, and used to give additional packing around Waltzing Jupiter, who was hog-tied, this time, and loaded like a dead elk into the ranch truck.

Waltzing Jupiter was indignant, but helpless. He was shaken loose from his fetters, and released into a pen, just within the Garden Gate fair-grounds. He was given water, imported alfalfa and other luxuries. In two days, on the date of the rodeo, he had come to be acclimated, localized and was just rearing to go. That morning, before any one was around, Jim Fallsy, of the Bird-Brands, fed Waltzing Jupiter some of those pretty flowered reapings. That horse

didn't particularly care for the stuff, but lacking alfalfa that morning, he ate of the strange feed. He had oats, too, afterward. He was sure stepping right when his number came on the program.

Waltzing Jupiter had listened for two days to the countless varieties of sound that permeate fair-grounds, when the music is playing, the crowd is on the move, and some countless automobiles are around with open cutouts. The horse was only too glad to go out into the open, to stretch and extend himself, and to see what was going on—with eyes that were swelling and standing out—and to do his share.

So now, Waltzing Jupiter sidled forth into the field at the Garden Gate county fair rodeo, with Tierail up. The rider was older than he had been. Waltzing Jupiter was seven years old, full prime and feeling not only his own proud strength—but more, too.

The riders who keep up year after year come at last to their biggest day. That is when they meet their match. Tierail had never known a qualm of doubt when exhibiting his skill whether to crowds or to the crystalline sky of some far-back pasture, forty miles from the nearest human. He had shown his fancies to hosts of people, and then he had by dark night-gloom performed for his own edification. He was simply a wild rider, one of those magnificent riding fools who have been valorous for valor's own sake, regardless of rewards. Half the truth about him never would be known—perhaps would bring him the joy unspeakable simply because if he was thoughtless and reckless, he was also unselfish as regards his pocket or his future. Never once had he looked beyond that hour when he should meet the inevitable.

Waltzing Jupiter came out with a slithering cougar, twisting rush, switching his tail low, instead of sticking it in the air. He weaved for twenty catty jumps, and then bucked as unexpectedly as a bear's side-swipe, or a shot to a grazing deer. In that flash of sunshine, quick eyes on the sidelines, and the long-practised scrutiny of Jim Fallsy, especially, as he rode hard-by off to the right, riding a gentled older brother of Waltzing Jupiter, saw an expression of amazed bewilderment cross the countenance of Tierail. Jim stood in his stirrup to yell on the instant:

"Thataboy, Jupiter! Yo' got 'im!"

Tierail was not gone. He still had the fight in him. He made the struggle of his life—for life against that wicked, stone-climber from the high pastures. He fought Waltzing Jupiter up and down—but every wrench twisted the rider's back, and every turn made his muscles stretch and crack, so that the sun in the sky lost its individuality, becoming a widening, multitudinous glare, that grew to him darker and darker. The shade began to fall slowly on the scene. The uproar of the standing mob, yelling their heads off, grew fainter and fainter. Cheers and jeers alike subsided into low murmurings—and still Tierail rode. Still he sat that saddle, but no longer in that easy, graceful, swaying, cigaret-rolling poise. He was riding for the first time with all his might, summoning every muscle to his help—knowing that he was going.

He wasn't afraid. He was surprised. He would be double —ed if he would squeal. He had a dozen chances to give up, to swing himself clear, but out of the glory of a hard man's life, one who had never said he would give up, he refused his chance to quit.

The crowd saw a curious exhibition of facing fate in the man-fashion. The keen observers, long experienced, realized that Tierail was defeated before they saw daylight between him and his saddle. Those who had seen him ride before recognized the hair-breadth differences between the sure winner and the loser going down, fighting, to his humbling.

Tierail had many enemies there. He had a crowd who hated his fame and disliked his ability. Scores longed to see him brought to his supreme hour of his life when he couldn't save himself—when only Fortune could retrieve him from disaster. He was done for as he sat in the saddle. The crowd recognized that Waltzing Jupiter had the count on him. They sure liked that rearing, hateful, plunging, treacherous old outlaw.

But in admiration of a brave man, struggling, and going down in the struggle, they grew slowly quiet. The voices died down. The honking of the auto horns ended abruptly. The guards on horseback drew back, to give them all the room. Then the plucking, the thumping, the scraping, the heavy pounding, and through it all, the hissing of breaths and the grunts, the groans, and more and more audible, the sharp,

involuntary cries of deep pain, of thrusts of anguish were heard as the horse filled his lungs—and Tierail gave the sure indications of his hurts, his rising tide of pain.

Now and then some shrill voice of an unconscious bystander rose—

"Ride 'im!" And again, "Oh! Ride him!"

These cries but intensified the raw, deep silence of the wide sage plains, of the rolling desert, disturbed but hardly interrupted by the scuffling and the smashing body blows, as a man went down to the crazed onslaught—barehanded and, even in his defeat, winning friendships and admirations that had never come to him while he was great in his unconquered strength.

The crowd began to have its doubts. The man stayed up long after he should have fallen. A yelping of encouragement began to well up. Then, with a lightning-leap, Waltzing Jupiter doubled his motion. Easing himself against a terrific jerk, Tierail for the first time missed his guess, and left the saddle. He lost his fork-grip. His knee caught and he was upended; something cracked, like a pistol shot in the staccato roll of yelps, and breathless silence again spread over the grand-stand and along the side-lines.

"He's gone! He's gone!" somebody wailed, in quick sympathy.

Mr. Roland Hawthorne, alias Tierail, himself now uttered no sound. With a broken thigh-bone, he made a magnificent effort, his last, tremendous display of the courage, of the man, of the spirit of his years' unflinching and uncompensated devotion to the greatness of unwhipped soul, no matter what the price, and then all gone—everything paid in with unstinted determination, he collapsed.

As the wreck of a man was flung like a limp bagful into the ascending convolutions of tawny dust, the watchful guards as one dashed in with their ropes whirling, hissing, but not till Waltzing Jupiter had swirled in midair and, infuriated, maddened, doped brute that he was, dived to make the kill.

The horse managed to land home with one pounce of his forehoofs. Then the lariats whistled in to ensnare him as he lifted, and the cutting ponies turned as quickly as he did, and threw him unceremoniously all clear of his victim, snatching him from over the prostrate Tierail in mid-air, tangled of legs and neck and stretched

in five directions while somebody ran to make sure by a tail-hold, too.



THE rider, when three months later he emerged from the Garden Gate hospital was an especially good recommendation of the skill and attentiveness of the institution's surgical and nursing force. He looked good, he limped hardly at all, he was sturdy—but his skill was gone; or rather something of his personality had faded from him. The bold impudence, the fire had departed from his pale-blue eyes. He stepped along, a bit clumsily after the habit of a rider, with some vim in his gait. But when he passed a horse he shied out and looked nervously, with obvious expectancy, at the animal's jaws and heels.

The wild rider was tamed. The fool rider had, some might say, come to his senses. Waltzing Jupiter had broken him. Tierail was done for as the principal exhibit at rodeos. His pride was utterly humbled. Those who had most longed to see this day of Tierail's life, when he would be afraid, now pitied him in the hiding-places of their hearts. They were not proud of it. The Bird-Brand boys did not rejoice in the fact that they had fed Tierail to a loco-doped horse of the high pastures. For a time they kept the secret. Indeed, it was to their interest to keep that fact dark. They immediately returned Waltzing Jupiter far into the mountains to turn him out. All hands chipped in. The day Tierail walked out of the hospital, all expenses paid by the fair association, one of the nurses slipped him a purse which the boys had made up—six hundred dollars in good gold. He had that, and no more, to show for his years of riding, for the reputation—now gone—and out yonder, beyond the corrals he sat staring at the cash.

The big brute of a horse went into the high pastures. He had not quite killed his man, but he might as well have done so, it seemed. He was ugly, mean, treacherous, and lived by himself apart from the herd. More and more he wandered off alone, keeping out of sight for weeks at a time. When he showed up, his shaggy, crawling gait betokened a bad actor and at last he disappeared from his own country.

"I expect that hoss is daid!" Jim Fallsy remarked on the absence, and with the fervency of an uneasy conscience, added with expletives, that he wished before

heaven and earth, that he was—such is the duplicity and shamelessness of mankind!

No one ever keeps track of broken riders, or outlaw horses of the range. The rider is likely to appear, a shuffling, nervous and watchful spectator at rodeos. In such places, perhaps a good has-been is pointed out as one who did something in the other days. Tierail went off down east, and worked for a time washing cars in a garage. Then he became sweeper-out in a ladies' notions store, and then he returned from Nebraska and the homestead country through Cheyenne into the high sage pastures again.

Really, he didn't look so different. The hospital had cured his body. Just his spirit was broken, and he couldn't keep away from the mountain sage. In three years, he was back on the plains, those high rolling green sage-plains. Then he worked down into the Red Desert, his old country. He clipped sheep, one Spring. He didn't become a shepherd, however. He did almost worse than that, from his old associates' viewpoint. He opened a little butcher-shop right there in Garden Gate. Nervous thrift had added to, rather than diminished his six hundred dollar stake.

He did his own killing. He stuck sheep, beeves, and even pigs. He knew meat. He built up a good business among the people of the coming city; he contracted with miner's boarding-houses; tourists heard of the low prices and high quality meats he sold and stopped in his shop for steaks, pot-roasts and chops. Tierail had a bank account!

Then he hired men to do his killing, and selling. He went out in an automobile to buy cattle. He began to ship cattle, and sheep. He knew everybody. His courage in making a success in a new field of endeavor won him in town consideration. But out on the ranges, among the riders, he would never come back. How could he?



THE Spring seemed to be early, the second year after Tierail began to put his fist to checks. The roads dried up, the skies cleared, and the grass sprang forth green as the snow melted from the high ranges. Needing some mutton, Tierail started out on the Divide road, toward the west. He located a flock of sheep he could buy, by telephoning into the valleys where they had wintered, waxing fat. But

his route was across sage-land, where cattle were spreading over the early pasture.

Out there, thirty miles from the nearest house, or shelter, Tierail looked toward the north and saw that the sky was gray instead of blue. He glanced around, startled. Surely, the south, the east, the west skies were blue! The sun was brilliant, fairly sparkling in the radiant crystalline sky! But the north was dimmed, growing grayer every second.

The pale shade swept out of the high ranges. It veiled and then hid the mountains. It spread wider, till suddenly the sun itself was dimmed. For a few minutes the sun struggled against the veil, but became a mere whitish disk in the sky, moon-like.

Tierail Hawthorn turned his automobile around, opened wide the throttle and headed for town, thirty miles back along the trail. Five minutes later needle-flakes of snow came behind him, hissed past him, and the wind screamed around the top of his old touring-car. With a lift, the top was torn to shreds, and the frame bent aslant. The car was jumping and bounding over the chunks and cobbles in the trail. Then he lost the ruts.

Suddenly, the front wheels dropped and the car shot into a dry wash, already filling with snow. The machine hit the opposite bank, and Tierail was thrown, like a blanket, over the steering wheel, but his arms held him clear.

"Hi-i!" he exclaimed with spirit. "Blizzard!"

Tierail stood up to smell the storm. He glanced quickly up and down the shallow dry wash. He figured his chances in seconds. He caught up the heavy old Indian blanket that he carried as a robe in his car, and when he did so, his hand closed on a long rope, a lariat that he used as a tow-line. The line gave him a bit of thrill, echoing out of the past. He had picked it up, perhaps a thousand times, while working around the old machine. Now he felt something not of automobiles nor of butcher-shops, not even of profits and making a money-barrier against future hurts.

He looked into the eye of the storm, squinting for a minute, and then turned to drift down wind through the rolling sage. He trotted along, stumbling more or less. The old cowboy instinct was with him. He would go on down until he arrived at a

shelter of some kind. He wanted a high bluff bank behind which he would be out of the wind, where he could roll up in the goat-hair blanket. He might under the snow come through. He knew his chances were doubtful. The storm was a bad one, screaming, howling, moaning, and the cold stung through his sheepskin jacket, through his woollens and into his flesh. He wrapped the heavy blanket around his head and body, stalking down wind like an Indian, hurried by the gale.

How far he had gone, how long he had been on the way he could not tell. The sun had vanished, and now daylight seemed to be departing, as if night was falling. Then he saw passing him a shadow, a steer also drifting before the driving crystal flakes, with head down, stepping fast. Other cattle came by. Horses, too, appeared, and one of these drew alongside Tierail, stumbling dejectedly as if afraid, alone.

Tierail shied from the animal. He felt his old fear of a horse. But he drew back to the animal on the instant, a stronger impulse than his nervous reaction conquering. The horse was company in the common peril. The old rider reached out his hand, stroking the dangling mane. The horse jerked back at the touch, but immediately crowded in again. Outlaw horse and Tierail went walking on together.

The horse cringed to the bitterness of that storm. He felt the horror of that raw cold. He had long run wild on the range, but he harked back to the times when humans had sheltered him, cared for him, fed him when the snow was deep over the grazing-ground. He had come upon a man out there in the wind-swept sage, to walk with him as the wind raged stinging through rough hair and scantily fleshed bones.

They were trudging along when night fell, when the blackness came, while the storm blew worse than ever, and the temperature went lower. Two or three times, Tierail nearly lost his hold on the horse. He was afraid to lose the animal. He dreaded to walk alone in that terrific blast. The snow was already clogging his feet. He felt himself growing numb.

He did not really know what he was doing, but with a leap he went up astride the horse, and the familiar position, the warmth, gave him sudden joy—new hope, confidence. The horse, too, seemed to take heart in the fact of unity with that human

burden. They kept plodding on steadily ahead. What the horse or man knew that night is a problem, for at the supreme crises of life who can tell what it is that inspires?

That blizzard made history along the north side of the Red Desert, and at Garden Gate, the gale swept between the two high range-ends that made the opening from the north, through the mountains into the vast plain beyond. Here the shacks, the bungalows, the old stone houses, and the new concrete buildings gave evidence of the city's growth—and here the storm howled, while it threw great May snowdrifts high in the lees down the streets, choking alleys and covering the earth.

All night the wintery blasts howled while the storm raged. All night the gale's voices rumbled and screamed in the pass through the mountains. At dawn the sun's rays swarmed suddenly up out of the east, and shot through the crystal snow-dust that still flew, the tail of the sixteen-hour storm. The sparkling of the brilliant flying gems was radiant with all the colors of rubies, sapphires, yellow topaz and diamonds—and emerald was the glory of the shadow against the sheathing of crystalline royal purple. On the instant people looked out, fearing the sting of the cold. They felt, instead, a warm Chinook breeze! And they sprang out into it, unbelieving, preparing to shiver, but crinkling comfortably, instead, feeling like purring cats. The storm had gone by in its blizzard, zero wrath, leaving a sweet scent like roses and sharp colors of the bitter cold, changing and softening as the day waxed clear and warm.

"Hi-i!" somebody yelled. "Look'tl!"

"Injun!" some one else grunted, disgustedly.

So it seemed as the peaked blanket wrapping was observed, but on second look, they saw the rider reeling as the blanket unfolded from about him. They saw a pale face, a ghostly white man's countenance, and as he fell baglike, they saw the horse step carefully clear. Immediately ready hands dragged the prostrate figure to the Garden Gate hospital.

This was Mr. Roland Hawthorn, the local meat-market man, sure enough. He was badly frosted. Once more the hospital had a chance to show what it could do for a man, in the person of Tierail. They even saved his fingers and toes, his nose and his ears, which were all frozen white. He came

through whole. They thawed him, renewed his circulation and brought him to par. But when he opened his eyes, he thought of none of his own affairs.

"Doc!" he exclaimed. "That hoss—Take care of him. He's—he's——"

"Never mind, brother!" the doctor said. "He's eating alfalfa, corn and oats in the Bon Ton garage this minute! The boys are nursing his ears, too—account of their being touched a bit, nipped!"

"Yeh! I know—I rubbed 'em. I rubbed em," Tierail said, musing.

Some time later, something more than a week, Tierail was up and clumping around, with aching legs, and arms, and his ears and nose peeling, but with blood circulating, nevertheless, as the doctor assured him, his gait like that of an old plains rider.

"Now that hoss, doc," Tierail demanded. "I want to know 'bout that hoss! I neveh rode no hoss jes' like that, not in all my borned days! Why, say, he was jes' a reg'lar he-hoss, spirited an'—an' gritty, but keerful. You know—friendly—considerate! Why, you know, I bet if hit wa'n't for that blizzard, they ain't no blamed man could a rid that hoss! I could jes' feel him, the way he set to hit—he wa'n't no common hoss. He was right off'n the range, but sensible. He knowed we had to pull together, that hoss!"



THE snow was gone. The streets were dried up. The city of Garden

Gate was once more in the beauty and splendor of a high-range May, with the flowers blooming over the plains, and the cattle that had survived the Winter were going out to feed on the strong grass of the great uplands.

Tierail limped and clumped, but unassisted went down the hospital steps to the city taxi. He was heading around to see that horse. He was driven along Red Desert Street, out toward the fair-grounds. A lot of people were watching him go, covertly. In fact, a kind of parade was formed, surreptitiously, so to speak, and everybody sort of sauntered along in it to go down with him. They met another parade coming up, from the corrals and pens—from the big garage and adjacent lively barns.

The two parades opened wide their heads, in a manner, and Tierail stood up to see clearly. Sure! There was a horse, a sorry

yellow horse, with scraggling tail and mane, with angular bones and a saw-tooth range along his back.

"Sho—doc!" Tierail stared at the animal, speaking to the man beside him. "Is that—is that there the hoss that brought me in—that what I *actually* rode?"

"Yes, sir, Tierail!"

"An'—an' that's the Bird-Brand—shore's I'm borned!"

"Yes, sir, Tierail. That's him. That's Waltzing Jupiter!"

"Sho, I know!" Tierail nodded. "I know—I knew hit all along, but doggone, now I gotta b'lieve what I know. When I went up on that doggone back, I shore knowed hit was familiar. Huh! Nobody eveh knowed that back, them rolling-fat ribs like I knowed 'em! Nope! Um-m—The way he shuddered, that fustest moment. Course, I'd neveh forget that! Yas, suh! I 'lowed—I 'lowed neveh to know that feeling ag'in. But I did. *Him!* An', doc. He brought me in. He brought me back. Way back! How come he done hit, doc?"

"Us boys have all been figuring on that, Tierail!" The doctor admitted. "Reckon we used up more dictionary language than on any other subject, not barring cattle, sheep or weather, and we don't know nor agree yet."

"Well, well, I know doc!" Tierail exclaimed lunging toward the horse with a low, exultant whoop, then talking as he approached.

Waltzing Jupiter tossed his head, in a kind of shamefaced, has-been way. The man threw his arms around the scrawny neck. He patted that sorry old yellow horse, the wreck of as wild and spirited a brute as ever made rodeo tradition. Tierail struggled against the emotions that filled him. He tried to talk in the old way, low and gentle, but he gave way to his feelings. Then the crowd, to a man, took off their hats; they understood. A man had come back, and knew it.

"Doc!" Tierail beckoned. "Come here!"

"Well, Tierail?"

"You know me, doc!" Tierail said, low and fiercely. "You know me. I have money in the bank. I run a big business. I own two blocks up town, theh! I ain't no blamed old has-been! I'm—I'm—kind of a he-man, I am!"

"Sure—I know!" the physician looked puzzled, nevertheless.

"This hoss—look't him! He's wasted; he's miserable; he's all broke, now. You know what 'tis, too, doc! Hit's the scandal across these plains about Waltzing Jupiter! Them blamed Bird-Brand ranch fellers ain't no proper people to take cyar of a hoss, nohow! Hear me, they ain't. Doggone! They fed up this old boy on loco-weed, when I was to ride him. They crazed him, those boys did, an'—an' doggone, they ain't held their haid up sinct! An' now, doc! Say, you ain't no hoss-doctor! Yo's a human—don't I know, but—but Waltzing Jupiter, now— Ain't he most human—ain't he human, too? C'mon, doc, be a

sport! Give'm a chance to come back. Po'r blamed old loco-eatin' hoss! He's locoed, doc, but he brung me back! Now, yo', doc—cure 'im? Won't yo' cure 'im, doc? Sho— Will yo'?"

"Why, sure, Tierail, I'll try! We'll all try!"

"All right, doc! No man can do more'n try!" Tierail nodded. "Lawse! An' that old hoss—he brought me in! An'—an' he brung me back. I come back—bare-back an' a r'aring! Sho! Old Waltzing Jupiter took me up, he *let* me ride! Doggone, he *made* me ride! An'—an' I can ride again! Whooe-e-e! Whoop-e-e-e——"

I'LL SAY

by Leonard H. Nason

ONCE on a time there was a boy,
Who left his home to go to war.
He was a simple country lad,
Who'd never been away before.

A year he wandered here and there,
From Devens south to Zachary;
At last when all his hope had fled,
They sent him swiftly oversea.

Cantigny, Vaux, Chemin-des-Dames,
Le Mort Homme, Rambucourt and Pannes,
Perthes-les-Hurlus, he saw them all,
And likewise the Hotel Sainte Anne.

Wounded he was, some several times.
They pinned a medal on his breast;
Gave him some stripes, a star or two,
And sent him home by way of Brest.

His friends and neighbors eagerly
Thronged in a mob about his door.
"Come out!" they cried, "and shake our hands,"
"And tell us all about the war."

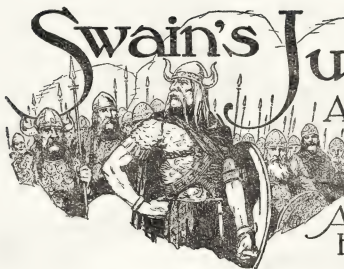
"Two years you've been away from home.
"We know you've lots to talk about.
"How did you like the French mamselles,
"How did you dig the Germans out?"

The boy was calm, his placid eye
Bent on them with a dreamy look.
Said he, "I never knew before,
"My mother was a marvelous cook."

Swain's Justice

A Complete Novelette

By
Arthur D.
Howden Smith



Author of "Porto Bello Gold," "Swain Jarl-Maker," etc.

ERIK BITLING—Little Bit—whom some men called "Crooked Legs" and who was forecastle man to Swain Olaf's son, was noted far and wide in the North countries for his wise saws and it was he who made the saying, "A little word brings a Jarl's death." But between the word and the death many things happened, and the manner of their occurrence was in this wise:

In the time when Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald's son ruled jointly in the Orkneyar and Caithness their two principal chiefs were Swain Olaf's son and one Thorbiorn Klerk, who had his name from his wisdom in council. Of these two, Swain was the best known and the most powerful, for it was said of him that he was the greatest man in the Norse lands of those who held no title. And indeed, many *scalds* have sung that had it not been for his lifelong preoccupation in a feud with Olvir Rosta, grandson to Frakork the Witch—the tale of which has been told elsewhere—he would have become another such ruler as Magnus Barelegs or Harald Fairhair; but whether that is true or not we can not say, for he was content with the respect and honor his prowess won and preferred to exercise his influence through others rather than be acclaimed Jarl or King.

Thorbiorn was so famous that he suffered by comparison only with Swain, and of this fact there is reason to suppose him to have been jealous. Nevertheless they were close

friends for long years, and Thorbiorn wedded Swain's sister, Ingrid. He was exceedingly popular, and being kin to Jarl Harald, was highly regarded by the young Jarl, who was accustomed to lean upon his counsel.

Swain was a famous viking leader, and it chanced one year that Thorbiorn proposed sailing in company with him upon a cruise to the Sudreyar* and the Syllingar† and the west coast of Bretland‡. They took with them five ships: Swain's big dragon *Death-Bringer*, of thirty oars a side, two other longships of his, each of twenty oars a side, and two of Thorbiorn's, also of twenty oars each. As it chanced, the luck was with them on this undertaking, and they acquired much booty, so that the longships were crammed with goods and gear until the rowers were hampered at the oars. They turned their prows northward in mid-Summer, and with fair weather came to the coast of Caithness where Thorbiorn held lands by Thorsa. And here Thorbiorn made signal that he desired a council. So the ships were drawn together, prow to prow, and the chiefs took station on the forecastles whence they could speak with one another.

"As I am near to my estate, Swain, I propose to leave you here," began Thorbiorn.

"I have no objection to that," answered Swain.

"In that case, we had best divide the plunder now," said Thorbiorn.

* Hebrides. † Scyllies. ‡ Britain.

"So far as I am concerned, the division we have made is fair enough," rejoined Swain. "My ships are full and so are yours."

Thorbiorn scowled.

"You may think so, but I do not," he barked. "When two chiefs sail in company they divide equally."

Swain's answer to this was a short laugh.

"He who sails with me takes what I allow him," he said.

"Not if his name be Thorbiorn!"

"If his name be Thorbiorn or aught else."

"You will earn yourself a new reputation—for being overbearing and inequitable," fumed Thorbiorn. "My men did most of the fighting in Uladstir.*"

"That may be true," assented Swain, "but it is equally true that they had the pick of the plundering there. And it is also true that I had almost twice as many men on the expedition as you."

"And for that reason you would over-ride me!"

Swain considered this deliberately.

"No, no," he said finally. "You are a friend of long standing, Thorbiorn, and eke my sister's husband. I will take from you what I would not from another, and agree to submit our case to the Jarls for judgment."

Now, at this there were outcries from the different ships, and the truth is that several of Thorbiorn's men spoke up in Swain's favor, for Swain was known for a rough-tongued, straightforward man, who ordinarily seized whatever he desired and paid for it if he wished, and not otherwise.

"Let be, Thorbiorn," they counseled. "This is more than Swain ever before offered any man who challenged him."

"I cannot help myself," retorted Thorbiorn ill-temperedly. "As you say, Swain, you have nigh twice as many men as I, and a dragon and two longships to my two. I must accept the slight you put upon me."

"Slight?" repeated Swain. "What slight have I—"

"You cannot dismiss it in that fashion," exclaimed Thorbiorn. "I laid claim to my just share of our spoils, and you refused it to me."

Swain stroked his long, ruddy beard.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "you laid claim to your just share—and your just

share shall you have. But I never heard before that a chief with two ships must share equally with a chief with three ships."

"That is to be seen," replied Thorbiorn, and he climbed down from the prow of his longship, and strode aft along the gangway between the rowing-benches, bidding his men pull on after Swain's ships to Orphir, where the two Jarls had their steadings.

"Here is a fellow whose hands have swollen from the oar-bite until they think to clasp more than human hands ever held," commented Erik Bitling as Swain frowned astern at Thorbiorn's longships.

"We will prick his blisters," growled Swain. "He may be my sister's man and Jarl Harald's kin, but he shall not possess what is not his."

II



JARL ROGNVALD and Jarl Harald were sitting at the high table in the skalli at Orphir when Swain and Thorbiorn tramped in at the head of their friends, and the two Jarls rose from their chairs and went forward to embrace the chieftains.

"You are welcome," cried Jarl Rognvald.

"Was your cruise successful that you are returned home so early?" asked Jarl Harald.

"We have fetched home much plunder and a quarrel," replied Swain before Thorbiorn could speak.

But Thorbiorn was quick to catch the advantage.

"I am come to appeal for justice, Lord Jarls," he declared.

"For justice?" repeated Jarl Rognvald. "Against whom, Thorbiorn?"

And Jarl Harald stared from one to the other of the two viking chiefs, a frown of bewilderment upon his face, for he loved both of them beyond any of the rest of his friends; Swain for that he had fostered him, aye, and secured him his share in the Jarldom, and Thorbiorn because the Caithness man was his cousin and had been his close adviser since youth.

"Against Swain," returned Thorbiorn to Jarl Rognvald's question.

"But Swain is your wife's brother," protested Jarl Rognvald. "What? Must viking-farers of such renown, who have fought and cruised together all these years, fall out upon some trivial question?"

"It is no trivial question, Lord Jarl," asserted Thorbiorn. "Swain defrauds me

* Uister.

of my just share of the booty our expedition has taken."

Jarl Rognvald looked askance at the two of them.

"It is well-known that Swain has a heavy hand, and is given to taking what he wishes," he said, "but I have never known him to be ungenerous with his fellows."

And Jarl Harald spoke up.

"This quarrel had best be composed here," he urged nervously. "We cannot afford to have men like Swain and Thorbiorn falling out. It is unthinkable that they should be separated by a dispute over plunder."

"Yet over plunder have they disagreed," observed Swain grimly.

Jarl Rognvald turned to him.

"What have you to say to this?" he demanded. "Thorbiorn has made a charge against you? Do you deny it?"

"How else should I be here, Lord Jarl?"

"I appeal for justice, Lord Jarls," demanded Thorbiorn again. "I am put to the inconvenience of coming all the way hither to Hrossey when I have not seen my lands in Caithness since the Spring, and I ask a swift justice."

"If justice is asked, justice shall be done," Jarl Rognvald assured him. "Come, Harald, we will go back to our seats, and hear what Swain and Thorbiorn have to say."

But Jarl Harald shook his head.

"In this case I may not dispense justice," he answered, "for, as all men know, I am connected by blood with Thorbiorn, while Swain fostered me in my youth. I love them both beyond other men, and I would not have either consider that he had grounds for nourishing a grudge against me by reason of an unfavorable judgment."

Thorbiorn's face fell at this, for he had counted much upon Jarl Harald's friendship to aid him in his suit.

"Why, there is nothing to choose from as regards your relationship with Swain and me," he argued. "We are on an even footing with you."

"I will not give judgment in this case," returned Jarl Harald stubbornly. "Moreover, it is always best to let one man judge a suit, when reliance can be placed upon that man's fairness."

There was a murmur of approval from the hall.

"Yes, yes," called the *boendr* and the

house-carls. "Rognvald is fair. Let the old Jarl judge."

"What say you, Thorbiorn?" asked Jarl Rognvald.

"I will accept what I must," he replied gruffly.

"And you, Swain?"

"It is all one to me, Lord Jarl," said Swain. "The case is simple enough."

Jarl Rognvald sighed.

"Two and twenty years have I been Jarl in these islands," he said unhappily, "and never have I been called upon to decide a more unwelcome suit, since either way I must offend a man I hold in much affection and respect. However, if chiefs disagree it is better that they should adjust their differences by law than by weapon clashing. 'You are the complainant, Thorbiorn. State your case.'"

So Thorbiorn Klerk came up to the dais, and Swain beside him, and he set forth his claim that he and his men had sustained most of the fighting during the expedition and had suffered the greater man-scathe, and that therefore he held they were entitled at least to a fair half of the booty. Jarl Rognvald heard him out in silence.

"You say that you lost twelve men by weapon-scathe, whereas Swain lost but eight men," said the Jarl when Thorbiorn had finished. "Now, I ask you this: Was Swain backward in the fighting? Did he delay to come to your aid whenever there was an on-fall?"

"No, that is not my contention," admitted Thorbiorn reluctantly.

"It was by chance, then, that you suffered more than he?"

"No, no, Lord Jarl," objected Thorbiorn. "If I had not harried the enemy when I did they would have had time to muster their strength and might have beaten us off."

"And if Swain had chanced upon them first, he must have done the same?"

Thorbiorn wiggled uncomfortably.

"Yes," he answered at last.

"So that it was the hazard of battle, and not——"

"But, Lord Jarl," shouted Thorbiorn angrily, "of eight score men I lost twelve, and Swain only eight out of nigh fourteen score."

There was a rustle of movement in the hall, a chuckle here and there. Jarl Rognvald caressed his beard thoughtfully.

"Swain brought fourteen score men and you eight score," he commented. "And he had a dragon and two longships to your two longships."

"But I lost——"

"Peace, Thorbiorn. You have stated your loss."

"Yes, and I must pay *manbote* to their families!"

"True! That is the hazard any chief accepts when he leads men viking-faring. Swain might have been in worse case, for he had more men to lose."

"I see not that that had ought to do with it," growled Thorbiorn. "Twas I lost twelve men and he——"

The Jarl turned from him to Swain.

"Do you dispute anything which Thorbiorn has said?" asked Jarl Rognvald.

"No, Lord Jarl."

"And how did you propose to divide the booty?"

"We had each ship as full as she could load—and I would have left them so. It was fairer to Thorbiorn than to me, seeing that he had first chance at the plundering in two of our richest on-falls."

Jarl Rognvald nodded.

"This is a very simple case," he announced. "My ruling is this: Swain has a right to a share of the plunder in proportion to the number of men and ships he put into the expedition. Three-fifths and the half of a fifth should be his. The rest should be Thorbiorn's, and if Thorbiorn believes that the booty was not divided in this proportion amongst the five ships, then, he has a right to ask that all the plunder be carried here and distributed under my supervision."

Thorbiorn glowered at Jarl Rognvald.

"I have suffered enough already at your hands," he snarled. "Why should I invite more loss?"

"I am your lord, Thorbiorn," replied the Jarl sternly. "It is not fitting that you should address me in that fashion."

"And it is not fitting that I should be made a mock before all your people, and my services put aside," returned Thorbiorn.

Several of his men shouted assent to this, rattling their weapons on their shields, and Erik and others of Swain's men answered them. And at this still others joined their voices in the uproar, including men who were friends to both chiefs, but had not participated in the expedition. Jarl Harald



stepped to the dais, and raised his arm for silence.

"It is disrespectful for any to challenge the justice of Jarl Rognvald's decision," he said no less sternly than the older Jarl had spoken. "Justice was asked for, and justice was given. It was because I foresaw that men would not be satisfied with any justice in this case that I withdrew from it, but that does not relieve me from the obligation of upholding Jarl Rognvald's authority. He who submits his case to the Jarl, must abide by what the Jarl decides. I am sorry for Thorbiorn, but he has lost."

"Fairly lost, Lord Jarl," cried a man from the body of the hall.

"I did not recognize your voice," replied Jarl Harald, "but——"

"My name is Thorarinn Killinef," answered the man, "and I spoke to say that Jarl Rognvald is a fair Jarl and dealt justly both by Thorbiorn and by Swain in this case."

Thorbiorn glared at the man who had pushed his way to the front of the room, and a tenant of Thorbiorn's, one Thorkell

who was in Orphir on business with his wife's relatives, shouted—

"Yes, yes, you are one to curry favor with the Jarl and Swain, Thorarinn, and much good may it do you!"

Thorkell clapped his hand to his sword as he spoke, and Thorarinn did the same, half-expecting an attack; but at a sign from Jarl Rognvald his house-carls came between the two.

"Let us make an end to talking," said the older Jarl wearily. "This case is judged—unless Swain has aught to say. He has said little so far."

"He whose cause is just does not require argument," answered Swain. "I have nothing more to say."

Thorbiorn's face turned purple with rage, and he drew his sword partway from its sheath, pushing it back again as Jarl Rognvald's house-carls started toward him.

"Justice!" he cried. "Here is no justice! But I might have expected it. All men say that both you Jarls fear Swain, for the one he showed how to conquer the islands and the other he fetched in as a boy to keep check upon the first. I am through with you."

Jarl Rognvald stood up, and the anger on his face was terrible to see.

"Take him, house-carls—" he started to say, but Jarl Harald caught his arm.

"No, no, Rognvald," cried the younger Jarl. "The man is beside himself. He will yet be sorry for it. Let him go."

Jarl Rognvald drew a deep breath.

"Very well," he said finally. "Let it be so, since you ask it, Harald. But no other man—no, not even Swain—has ever so flouted me, and lived. Beware lest you rouse my wrath again, Thorbiorn Klerk. The next time I shall not be merciful."

Thorbiorn's acknowledgment of the Jarl's grace was a scowl of hatred, and he shouldered his way from the hall at the head of his followers.

III



IT WAS well toward evening when Thorbiorn left the *skalli*, and Jarl Rognvald invited Swain and others of the chiefs to remain and drink ale with him and Jarl Harald. There was much interest in the deeds Swain had performed upon his last expedition, and he described them at some length, always scrupulous to

give Thorbiorn a full measure of credit for what he had done. Jarl Harald spoke of this as the serving-men were lighting the candles with the deepening of the twilight.

"It is plainly to be seen that you have no feeling against Thorbiorn Klerk," he remarked sadly, "and I marvel at the bitterness which he displayed against you."

"He is not the first man to set too much store by himself," replied Swain, "yet I should be dishonest did I deny him the merit of being a skilful warrior and always forward in the weapon showing."

"We must make shift to compose the difference between you two," said Jarl Harald. "It is not chiefs like you, grown men, seasoned in war, who set the islands by the ears with their disputes."

"My hand is Thorbiorn's whenever he expresses himself satisfied with the treatment I gave him and with Jarl Rognvald's justice," answered Swain.

"How say you, Rognvald?" asked Jarl Harald. "Will you forgive Thorbiorn his rash speech?"

Jarl Rognvald was in all things kind of heart and disposed to forgiveness, so easy-going, in fact, that many men accused him of making it a vice.

"Thorbiorn Klerk is a good fellow, if hot-headed," he said now. "Let him unsay what he must know was false, and I——"

There was a great commotion outside the *skalli*, with shouting of men's voices, the shrill screams of women and a clatter of weapons. Jarl Rognvald leaped up and buckled his sword about him.

"Perhaps I spoke too soon," he commented.

Jarl Harald and Swain and the others followed his example as the uproar outdoors became louder and louder.

"The village is crowded with viking-farers and island folk here for the market," said Jarl Harald. "There must be some brawl toward. Swain, you will have to punish your men if they have broken loose."

But at this Erik Bitling ran in the *skalli* door.

"Haste, Lord Jarls!" he shouted. "Thorkell, Thorbiorn Klerk's man, set upon Thorarinn in the village street, and Thorarinn slew him, and is fled to the church with Thorbiorn and all the Caithness men at his heels."

"Humph," said Swain, "this becomes more serious."

"It becomes a case where my justice will strike all who oppose it," gloomed Jarl Rognvald. "After me, those who love me."

The crowd yielded to him when he reached a knot of men packed against the massive doors of the church, which one of their number was battering with an ax.

"Make way, there," bade Rognvald again as these men showed a disposition not to budge.

And he heaved them right and left.

"So!" he exclaimed, his beard a-bristle with anger. "You would stand before your Jarl! House-carls, chop me off the arm of the fellow that lingers in my path."

They scattered at that, and bared the back of Thorbiorn Klerk, who pecked away at the church door with his ax, entirely heedless of whatever went on below him.

"It seems that you not only have no respect for me, but none for Holy Church as well, Thorbiorn," said Jarl Rognvald.

Thorbiorn turned reluctantly, holding his ax as if to parry a blow.

"I fear the reproaches of my followers," he answered. "What will they say of me if I do not punish the man who slew Thorkell?"

"And what will I do to you if you do not presently sing a milder tune?" retorted Jarl Rognvald.

"You have no right to come between me and the man who slew my tenant," persisted Thorbiorn.

"I have every right," rejoined the Jarl. "Aye, even the right to slay you for broiling in my presence and upsetting the peace of my stead. What, fellow, are you become greater than we who are your lords?"

He waved forward a brace of house-carls.

"Take him to the fetter room. We will try if a diet of cold water and bread does not tame your spirit, Thorbiorn. You are grown over boastful of yourself."

But Jarl Harald interceded a second time, as Thorbiorn drew back and raised his ax.

"The offense is a grave one, Rognvald," said the young Jarl, "yet I beg of you to overlook it. Thorbiorn is a famous warrior, and has always been an honorable man. It would ill become us to stain his honor by making him a prisoner. Let us rather admonish him to mend his behavior and send him home to reflect upon it."

"Yes, yes," said Swain. "I would not have you punish Thorbiorn like a hasty

youth, Lord Jarl. Moreover, it may be he has some right on his side. You have not yet examined the people concerning what happened."

"That is true," admitted Jarl Rognvald. "How was it, Thorbiorn? Did Thorarinn set upon Thorkell?"

"Why, they had words together," began Thorbiorn uncertainly. "I saw the people rushing together in the street, and then——"

"No, no," spoke up several men in the crowd about the church steps. "Thorkell reproached Thorarinn as they came forth of the *skalli*, and finally struck him in the face."

Others likewise bore witness to this, and the stern look returned to Jarl Rognvald's face.

"What have you to say, Thorbiorn?" he asked.

"Only this," replied the Caithness man boldly: "Here you and yours are my masters, but the hour will come when I shall have my vengeance. I am none to accept a slight, and there was a slight laid upon me when Thorkell, who spoke in my favor, was slain by Thorarinn for that very reason."

"Here is a matter for Thorarinn to testify to," advised Swain. "Let him be brought from the church."

Jarl Rognvald agreed with this, and required Thorbiorn to stand down from the church door. Then Thorarinn was haled forth. He came willingly as soon as he was told that the Jarl desired him and that Thorbiorn was constrained not to harm him.

"It is in my mind that this was a shabby deed you performed in our midst, Thorarinn," said Jarl Rognvald. "A man slain under such circumstances as Thorkell may cause a feud the consequences of which no man can foresee."

"I shall never question that, Lord Jarl," replied Thorarinn. "But I had no choice. First, Thorkell reviled me for speaking up as I did in saying that you had judged fairly between Thorbiorn and Swain. And not content with that, when I upheld myself and you, he struck me in the face before the *boendr*."

Again men shouted affirmation of the testimony.

"Are you certain that Thorkell first spoke to you after you left the *skalli*?" pressed the Jarl.

"May Christ desert me if it be otherwise." Jarl Rognvald leveled an accusing forearm at Thorbiorn.

"You have heard," he snapped. "What do you say?"

Thorbiorn shrugged his shoulders.

"Naught, for that it would do me little good to say anything. This case is of a kind with that you decided within doors. The men I charge are your men, and you will decide for them."

What Jarl Rognvald would have said to this no man knows, for Jarl Harald took the words from his mouth.

"Get you gone, Thorbiorn," he ordered hurriedly. "I think some troll has muddled your wits. Man, you yourself are the worst enemy you ever had. Go quickly, I say, or you will wear out my patience also."

"Yes, yes," echoed Jarl Rognvald then. "Go, before my temper stiffens, Thorbiorn. You are a troublemaker we can spare. Do you bide upon your property in Caithness until you hear from me that you may venture afield. And walk warily, or I will outlaw you and all who consort with you."

Thorbiorn glared at the circle of men who surrounded him and the man whose sanctuary he would have violated. His own followers discreetly had disappeared.

"Wo the day ever I had friendship for Swain Olaf's son," he cried. "Little has it brought me save humiliation and disgrace. And I call all to witness that I charge him here with the trouble that has befallen me."

"Not so," denied Jarl Rognvald. "You yourself, as Jarl Harald has just told you, are your worst enemy. Swain speaks kindly of you in all things, but in justice to his men, he must have insisted upon a fair share of the spoils of your expedition, even though he was disposed to yield to you on his own account."

Thorbiorn tossed his ax over his shoulder.

"There is at least this truth in what you say, Lord Jarl," he answered. "Without your backing, Swain could do me little harm. I shall not forget that when the right time comes."

And he strode fearlessly through their ranks and made his way down to where his longships lay off the strand.

"We must not be too severe with Thorbiorn," said Jarl Harald. "He has been twice wrong, and that irks the pride of a strong man."

"It is no matter whether we are severe

or not," rejoined Swain. "I suspect this is the beginning of a coil the Norns will spin for many a day."

"That is well spoken," endorsed Erik Bitling. "For the ice-berg did not know when the water made it."

Jarl Rognvald tugged at his beard.

"God willing, we have acted for the best," he said. "Thorarinn, I have no fault to find with what you have done, but I expect that you will be careful in future to give no fresh offense to Thorbiorn or his people."

Thorarinn promised that he would obey the Jarl's command, and as Thorbiorn shoved off his keels for Caithness on that tide, men soon dismissed the quarrel from their minds. It was a good Summer, with a rich harvest in view.

IV



SWAIN sailed the next day for his estates on Gairsey, which is off the mouth of the Aurrida Firth on the north coast of Hrossey, and busied himself there in checking over the accounts of his steward and overseeing the preparations for the harvest. He also divided up his booty amongst the followers who had accompanied him on his cruise, paid *manbote* to the families of those who had been slain and shedded over his ships.

In some years it was his custom to go Autumn viking after the harvest had been reaped, but he had gained so much plunder on the cruise with Thorbiorn that he decided to bide at home and administer his property and oversee the education of his sons, Olaf and Andreas. Wife he had none, for she who had borne his children was locked fast in a nunnery where she might not plague him with her vanity and false heart.

He dwelt thus quietly upon Gairsey until the Summer was all but passed, when on a certain afternoon a messenger, named Asolf, came to him from Jarl Rognvald.

"Here is foul news, Swain," he called as he entered the yard.

"What mischief has been done?" answered Swain.

"Thorbiorn Klerk has slain Thorarinn Killinef, who killed Thorbiorn's man, Thorkell, in the brawling at Orphir the day you returned from your last cruise," replied Asolf.

"This is a bad business," he added. "I

can see that we shall have more trouble from my dispute with Thorbiorn—unless, that is, Thorarinn gave Thorbiorn sufficient excuse for the slaying.”

“You say rightly that it is a bad business, Swain,” agreed Asof. “And as for excuse, there was none. Thorarinn was cut down as he drank in Gudrun Karl’s daughter’s inn, without a chance to draw a weapon.”

“In Jarl Rognvald’s own village!” he said. “The Jarl can never tolerate such an insult.”

“He can not,” answered Asof. “More especially, seeing that Thorbiorn came secretly in the night with no less than thirty men, and after slaying Thorarinn burnt his house and drove out his family.”

“Where was the Jarl?”

“He was visiting Bishop William, but he is now returned to Orphir with Jarl Harald, and they take ship tomorrow for Caithness to bring punishment to Thorbiorn. The Lord Jarl summons you by me to accompany him, but he would not have you burden any of your people with service. His own house-carls will be sufficient.”

“I will go gladly,” replied Swain. “Erik, do you don your mail, for I would have you with me. We shall have a deal of weapon play before Thorbiorn is punished; he is a mighty warrior.”

“He is so,” assented Erik. “It is in my mind that Jarl Rognvald esteems him too lightly, for Thorbiorn is crafty as well as strong.”

“Be that as it may, little man,” said Swain, “it is not for us to instruct the Lord Jarl in how he takes his vengeance. Let us first see how the gods dispose the hearts of all concerned. And remember that Thorbiorn is my sister’s husband. If it is not too late for him to repent the course he has taken we may compose the matter without more slaying.”

“It is not like you to talk so, Swain,” commented Erik. “You are all for blows first, and reason afterward.”

“Ah,” said Swain, “but as I grow older I learn. Also, I would not have this quarrel widen, for it began with me. I know well how dear is Thorbiorn to Jarl Harald, and not for all my lands would I see a breach formed between Jarl Harald and Jarl Rognvald.”

The three crossed the Aurrida Firth in Asof’s boat to Rennadale, and so fared over the island paths on Hrossey to Orphir on the

shores of Medallands Hofn. They entered the *skalli* of Jarl Rognvald an hour past candle-lighting, when the benches were crammed with chiefs and house-carls. Asof led them straight to the high table, where the two Jarls sat with Jomar, Asgrim’s son, Magnus Gunni’s son and others of their kin.

Jarl Rognvald welcomed Swain cheerily, but Jarl Harald’s dark face was mantled with sorrow. His meat lay untouched on the trencher in front of him and the foam was high upon his ale-cup.

“Well I knew that I would not call for you in vain, Swain,” cried Jarl Rognvald. “I had thought to bid you presently to accompany us when we went to hunt the reindeer in Caithness, but now it seems that we shall hunt nobler prey.”

Jarl Harald flushed.

“This prey is cousin to me, Rognvald,” he exclaimed. “Do you consider that in speaking as you do you add to my happiness?”

Jarl Rognvald dropped a kindly hand upon the younger Jarl’s shoulder.

“I am at fault, Harald,” he apologized. “But let me ask you this: If Thorbiorn is your cousin and has your sympathy, what of me, who am also cousin to you, who protected you in your childhood and who have dealt always kindly by you, and who have been wronged without just cause, as all men agree, by the man with whom you sympathize?”

Jarl Harald hid his face in his hands.

“It is too much for me,” he cried. “On the one hand is Thorbiorn, who shared with Swain the fostering of me. On the other are you, Rognvald. Whatever happens I must suffer.”

Swain took the seat between the two Jarls which Jarl Rognvald thrust out for him.

“Yes, Jarl Harald, all that you say is true,” he said. “But do not forget that you are a Jarl, and from a Jarl more is expected than from a common man.”

“A Jarl is no more than a man, Swain,” protested Jarl Harald. “You, yourself, have often said it.”

“That have I,” admitted Swain. “And it has been the fault of Jarls that I have said it. But none the less it is true that a Jarl should be more than a common man, and the great Jarls are those of whom it can be said that they remember oftenest that to

them the folk look for justice. I have known you, Lord Jarl, since you were shorter than my sword, and on the whole I have been proud that I had a share in bringing you into the Islands. It is my hope that you will not act so that I shall be shamed in my connection with you."

Jarl Harald flushed anew as the words sank into his brain, but when Swain concluded he squared his jaw and offered his hand.

"Honest speech is best," he said. "It requires you to solve the difficulties I find myself in, Swain. And I will be guided by what you say. For surely what a Jarl should be known for first of all is justice. Justice I will strive for in this matter."

"In that event your reputation will not suffer," answered Swain. "My own hope is that Thorbiorn will be brought to reason and offer *manbote* to Thorarinn's family and due compensation to Jarl Rognvald. I am a rough fellow, myself, and I know how easily a rough fellow can be induced to practise conduct which he may later have cause to regret."

The chiefs all said that this was a very handsome way of looking at the trouble, and it was suggested that Swain might be appointed an emissary to argue Thorbiorn into readiness to accept adequate fine and punishment.

"I will do so gladly," promised Swain, "if Thorbiorn indicates his willingness to receive me. We shall know better what to expect after we have entered Caithness."

They sat late that night over the ale-drinking, and when they broke up there was a feeling that they might yet avoid coming to blows.

"I am an old man," said Jarl Rognvald, "and it has been my hope that my people would be satisfied with my rule, for I have striven always to deal honestly by them."

"It is not in the nature of people to be satisfied with anything," muttered Erik Bitling to Swain as they left the high table to seek bed room.

"Be still, little man," rebuked Swain. "The ale is sour on your stomach."

V



THE two Jarls and Swain crossed the Pentland Firth with one hundred men and twenty horses in three boats, and landed at Thorsa. They made inquiry in the vicinity for Thorbiorn, but

none of the Caithness folk would say where he was, for Thorbiorn was well-liked and eke feared in those parts. Jarl Rognvald consulted with his followers, and they decided to journey inland to the valley of the Kalfadal*, where lay the lands of Thorbiorn and his kin—such as Hosvir, his brother-in-law, and his cousins, Liotulf and Hallvard Dufa's son.

That night they made camp in the open, and they were all sitting around the fires, discussing the best way to come at Thorbiorn, when one of the guards came to Jarl Rognvald's side.

"Lord Jarl," he said, "there is one out in the darkness, crying like a woman, and some of us fear that it is either an evil spirit or Thorbiorn, trying to trick us."

Jarl Rognvald crossed himself, as did Jarl Harald and several others.

"Now, Christ save us from the Evil One and all black magic," exclaimed Jarl Rognvald. "Harald, I never heard that Thorbiorn had traffic with the war-locks."

"Nor did he," said Jarl Harald.

Swain scrambled to his feet.

"I have withstood the blackest magic that witch Frakork could make," he said. "It should go hard if I might not resist some spirit howling in the night. Lead the way, fellow, and I will make trial of this crying thing."

So he went with the man—whose name was Bjarni Aslak's son, from Westrey—out upon the hillside, and sure enough, there came to their ears a distant sound of wailing, such as is made by a woman in time of grief.

"Humph," said Swain, "that is a human voice or I am as great a fool as you, Bjarni. Also, I could swear I have heard it before."

And he strode forward to the hilltop, placed his cupped hands to his mouth and sent a hail booming across the rugged dales.

"Ho, you who cry in the night! What sorrow nags you? Here are a warm fire and food for the taking."

An instant of silence, and then the woman sobbed again.

"I am alone and frightened," she wailed. Swain threw down his shield, and ran down the far side of the hill toward the voice.

"I am Swain Olaf's son," he called. "I will not harm you."

"Swain!" sobbed the voice. "Swain! Is

* Calder Burn.

it soothingly you? I am Ingrid, your sister."

Swain stopped dead, and peered warily around him.

"Ho-ho," he said to himself. "I had best walk slowly. A sister is a sister, but a wife is a wife."

And to Ingrid he called:

"Where is Thorbiorn? How come you here, woman?"

"He cast me out," she sobbed. "He has put me from him."

Swain growled deep in his throat.

"Have you harmed him, sister? Have you done wrong?"

"No, no. He said that I reminded him of you, whom he hated and who had humiliated him."

"We shall see about that," answered Swain. "Heretofore I have endeavored to believe the best of Thorbiorn, but from this moment he is become my enemy. Step out, sister, and I will lead you to Jarl Rognvald, who will send you to shelter and women's care."

She stumbled from behind a clump of bushes and sank into his arms.

"Has Thorbiorn beaten you?" he asked quickly, the blood hammering at his temples.

"No, but I have wandered the day long without food, for his servants and tenants feared to help me."

"And where is he?"

She began to speak, then choked back her words.

"No, Swain, I may not say."

"May not say! Girl, he cannot harm you now."

"Ah, but I have shared his bed these many years. Shall I betray him to his death—for any cause?"

Swain was silent until they had reached the edge of the circle of fire-light within the camp.

"I know naught of women's honor," he said gruffly, then, "Were you other than my sister I would torture you to wring from you what I sought, but since you are my sister I am helpless. What the Jarl will say is another matter."

But Jarl Rognvald showed greater readiness than Swain to respect her loyalty to the husband who had cast her off.

"It is so I would wish my daughter to feel," he said. "My men will build you a bower here by the fireside, and in the morning we will send you to Thorsa, where you

can take ship for Gairsey and forget the sorrow which has come upon you."

She thanked him brokenly, and so Ingrid, Olaf's daughter, passes from this story. Her lot was a sorry one, and the Orkney folk mourned for her; but in the heavier misfortune which was to fall upon the Islands there was little time to lament one woman's shattered happiness.

When she had been attended to, Swain turned upon Jarl Harald, who had sat silent since she was brought to the fireside.

"What say you now of Thorbiorn's guilt?" he demanded.

"He has done wrong," answered Jarl Harald, "but I am sure he will repent. Wait until I have had speech with him, Swain."

"I will wait for nothing," retorted Swain fiercely. "No man ever put such a slight upon me and lived. He shall pay me for it to the bitter end. Ha, he was not satisfied with Jarl Rognvald's justice! Well, now he shall taste of Swain's justice."

"Hard words make for needless deaths," pleaded Jarl Harald.

"Of that there is no question," spoke up Jarl Rognvald. "And Thorbiorn's conduct proves the truth of the saw. It will be strange if we carry through his punishment without slaying him."

"St. Magnus send his death be not the presage of others," said Jarl Harald.

"I will be his death," answered Swain impatiently. "Of that you may be sure."

VI



IN THE morning the two Jarls and their people rode along the valley of the Kalfadal and the neighboring hillsides, asking of the folk they met where Thorbiorn was hidden, and again they received only noncommittal answers and sullen looks. When they had passed the morning thus Swain suggested that they spread out into a screen, so that they might cover a wider stretch of country and make their search more thorough. Jarl Rognvald accepted the plan, but Jarl Harald said nothing, and the end of it was that Jarl Rognvald went ahead upon one side of the valley and Swain upon the other, but Jarl Harald lagged behind and out of hearing. Men who knew the young Jarl well said that they had never seen him so distraught as that day by Kalfadal.

Because of the searching and of Jarl Harald's reluctance to take part in it their company was much separated. Ahead of all rode Jarl Rognvald, accompanied by two other mounted men—that Asolf who had summoned Swain from Gairsey, and Jomar, the kinsman of the Jarl. A considerable distance behind came a score or two of men on foot, who examined the fields, thickets and buildings in their path. After them, in turn, came Jarl Harald, as has been said, with perhaps as many more men who were his personal following. And off three or four bow-shots on the right Swain conducted a party who searched in that quarter.

So it chanced that Jarl Rognvald, attended but by Asolf and Jomar, rode into the yard of a stead belonging to a farmer named Hoskuld, who was a tenant of Thorbiorn's and with whom Thorbiorn was concealed. This stead was built upon the summit of a small hillock, and the entrance to the *skalli* was through an unroofed stone passage, wide enough for only one man to pass through it at a time, which wound around the slopes of the hillock. Hoskuld was standing upon a corn-stack, piling the corn which his servants fetched in from the fields, as the Jarl rode up, and he greeted the Jarl at once in a very loud voice.

"Ho, Jarl Rognvald," he shouted. "How comes it that you visit me without warning, and a tail of men behind you stretching across the hills?"

As Hoskuld intended, this speech reached the ears of Thorbiorn, who was sitting in the *skalli* with eight of his followers, fully armed, and gave him warning of his danger. But of this, of course, Jarl Rognvald was ignorant.

"You need not shout at me, farmer," the Jarl answered. "My hearing is good. I am seeking—"

But he said no more, for Thorbiorn and the eight others had run out of a concealed door in the *skalli* wall, circled the gable end of the building and then traversed the flat top of the outer wall of the passage through which the *skalli* was reached. On top of this wall they were a little above the Jarl and his men on horseback, and Thorbiorn struck down at Jarl Rognvald almost before the Jarl realized that he was being attacked.

In fact, so dazed was the Jarl that he made no effort to protect himself, but the

youth Asolf interposed his naked arm between Thorbiorn's sword and the Jarl's head. The blade bit through flesh and bone and sheared off the boy's whole forearm and hand, and withal, sliced away the whole front of the Jarl's chin, making a terrible wound.

Neither the Jarl nor Asolf was dismayed, however. The Jarl made an effort to dismount from his horse, which was restive, and at the same time reached for his sword; but the blood from his wound confused him and his foot caught in his stirrup, and as he was half in, half out, of his saddle, Thorbiorn struck him again and Stefan Radgiafi—The Counselor—stabbed him with a spear.

Asolf staggered forward in an attempt to intervene once more, but his strength was failing him, and he cried out:

"Let those serve the Jarl now who have to thank him for greater gifts than I! I have done all I may."

Thorbiorn would have smote Jarl Rognvald a third time, but Jomar, the Jarl's kinsman, whose horse had taken fright and backed away, contrived to thrust himself before the two wounded men, and with a hunting-spear he wounded Stefan Radgiafi and also pierced Thorbiorn's thigh.

Asolf's shout had called the attention of others of Jarl Rognvald's folk, and as they commenced to stream forward Thorbiorn took fright, leaped from the passage wall and with his men behind him ran speedily out of the stead yard and across a stretch of bog. They did not tarry until they had crossed the moss-hag which ran through the bog, on the farther bank of which they were joined by Hoskuld, the farmer, and his sons and servants and other folk of the vicinity, who rallied to Thorbiorn's support to the number of fifty.

In the meantime, Jomar had lifted Jarl Rognvald from his horse and done what he could for him, but all efforts were fruitless. The Jarl died on the bed of corn-stalks they made for him, and Jomar dispatched messengers to summon Jarl Harald and Swain.

Swain was farthest away, and there was delay in finding him, but the messenger who sought Jarl Harald came upon him on a slight eminence when he was watching Thorbiorn and the party of Kalafadal folk mustering their strength on the opposite side of the moss-hag. Some of Jarl Harald's men had noted Thorbiorn's flight, for

he had passed across their line of march, and they were arguing that the young Jarl should lead them to attack him.

"I do not see that that is necessary," replied Jarl Harald stubbornly. "Let us rather study what Thorbiorn does, and bide until Jarl Rognvald joins us. Then, perhaps, we——"

It was at this point that Jomar's messenger pushed his way through the ranks of Jarl Harald's attendants.

"Jarl Rognvald will never join you, Lord Jarl," he panted. "Thorbiorn has slain him."

Jarl Harald clutched his spear very tight.

"Are you sure of this?" he asked.

"I saw the Jarl dead," affirmed the messenger.

"Alas, this is what I foresaw," cried Jarl Harald. "Well I knew, naught but trouble would issue from this expedition."

Then he asked the messenger if there was anything possible to be done in Jarl Rognvald's behalf, and the messenger answered—

"Only a fitting vengeance."

At this Jarl Harald blinked his eyes.

"Vengeance is a word I have never liked," he said. "Let us endeavor instead to see that no more men's lives are sacrificed in this vain quarrel."

He marshaled his men to the edge of the bog, where Jarl Rognvald's folk, leaderless and blind in their rage, were casting spears at Thorbiorn's men. Thorbiorn, very craftily, instructed his men not to cast back the spears that were hurled at them, and so by the time Jarl Harald had arrived practically all the spears of his assailants were in his hands. Jarl Rognvald's followers were not numerous enough to force their way across the bog and the moss-hag in face of the men at Thorbiorn's back, and they were equally at a loss for lack of a leader who was skilled in war.

Jomar and others ran to Jarl Harald's side as he rode amongst them.

"See, Lord Jarl," they called. "There are the murderers of our lord. Do you lead your men and us, and we will soon get across and be the means of his death."

"And if I do so many of you will die," answered Jarl Harald. "Let us see if we can not arrange matters otherwise."

There were loud protests at this from the ranks of Jarl Rognvald's men, and Thorbiorn, noting the apparent dissensions amongst his adversaries, went to the edge

of the moss-hag and called across to Jarl Harald.

"Do not let these men take away my life, kinsman," he said. "What I have done weighs heavy upon me, but I had no choice save to do it, for if I had not slain Jarl Rognvald he would have been my death."

"It was an evil deed, Thorbiorn," replied Jarl Harald sorrowfully. "I know not what I can do."

"No, then, kinsman," Thorbiorn said again, "if it was an evil deed, as you say, why will it be less evil for you and I, between us, to be the deaths of a score or two more? Here are your folk and mine, each of us well armed and determined, and if we come to weapon-clashing there will be such a man-scathe as will be mourned for many years."

"I know that to be so, Thorbiorn," said Jarl Harald, "but Jarl Rognvald's men are very bitter against you, and they say——"

"Let them say what they please," urged Thorbiorn boldly, for he saw now that Jarl Harald was indeed loath to move against him. "If I have slain Jarl Rognvald, who will profit from it, unless it be you?"

"No, no," cried Jarl Harald.

"But I say it must be you," insisted Thorbiorn. "For he had you under his thumb and left you no more power than if you had been a page, so that you were Jarl only in name. It is a crime to be the death of a man, I know, but great good may flow from any deed, and surely you would be the last to say that I have harmed you by what I have done, seeing that to you will revert all Jarl Rognvald's dominions, he having left no son."

"He was my good friend," answered Jarl Harald, "and I had all the power I required under him. You do ill to try to poison me against his memory. He was a good lord, as all men say."

"That was he," Thorbiorn agreed readily. "And like all good lords and strong warriors he seized all the power he could. So, likewise, will you, now that you are Jarl alone. And why would it be wicked for you to deal gently with me, who have never harmed you? If you do otherwise many of us must die, and men and women will call down curses upon your name."

"What I can do in this matter I am not sure," replied Jarl Harald, "but I could never let you go unpunished. It is a dreadful thing to slay a Jarl, Thorbiorn."

"That may be so," admitted Thorbiorn. "After all, I ask no more than that you assure me quarter, kinsman. I will leave the decision in this case entirely to you. Is not that fair to all concerned? It means that instead of a raven's feast here on Kalfadal men may return to their wives and children, and you can judge me at leisure."

Jarl Rognvald's men cried out against this suggestion, but Jarl Harald was impressed by the apparent fairness of what Thorbiorn offered.

"He will surrender without more blood-letting," he argued with those who opposed Thorbiorn's terms. "What more could you wish? Because the Jarl has died is no reason why a score of you should follow him."

"Your words are as senseless as those of a child in fear, Lord Jarl," interposed a new voice, and those surrounding Jarl Harald turned to meet Swain. "The punishment for Thorbiorn's offense is death, and if you offer him anything less you betray Jarl Rognvald and his trust in you."

Jarl Harald colored deeply. He was a very swart man, and when his feelings were hurt his face turned darker yet.

"I can see that you are set upon making trouble, Swain," he said coldly. "It is the conduct you are best at."

"I do not call it trouble," answered Swain. "I am after justice, and if you as Jarl will not secure justice for Jarl Rognvald and those of us who loved him, why, I am prepared to exact Swain's justice."

"You hate Thorbiorn because he has quarreled with you and put away your sister," charged Jarl Harald.

"That is partly true," said Swain. "It would be reason enough by itself, but if that were all I had against Thorbiorn I would go after him with my own men and ask assistance from nobody else. As it happens, he deserves to be punished first of all for his misdeed in slaying Jarl Rognvald as foully as he did Thorarinn. The one, who was a common man, he slew from behind in an inn; the other, who was a Jarl, he slew without warning, as a fugitive from the Jarl's justice. Such a man is unsafe to leave at large in these lands, and there will be many who agree with me."

Now, Jarl Harald was deeply troubled, for in his heart he knew that Swain was right, yet every time he looked across the bog and the moss-hag at the stalwart figure

of Thorbiorn, whom he had loved since childhood, a quail rocked his determination and his thoughts went back to the many kindnesses the outlaw had shown to him and the years of love that had linked them together.

"I have no desire to quarrel with you at such a time, Swain," he said. "But I ask you to remember that Jarl Rognvald's first thought was always for the safety of the Orkney folk. Would he ask us to be the means of the deaths of a score or two of men for the purpose of slaying Thorbiorn out of hand—when Thorbiorn, himself, has offered to surrender and submit his case to me for trial?"

Swain smiled mockingly.

"Ah, yes, Lord Jarl, Thorbiorn has offered to accept quarter and a 'fair' trial from you because well he knows that if he ever had your ear for a day you would never suffer his death. Exile you might give him, but no worse. And well do we know it, too—nor will we tolerate it."

Jarl Harald's hand flew to his sword.

"I have accepted plain speech from you, Swain, but I am at the end of my patience," he warned.

"So am I," roared Swain. "Jarl you may be, but I have known you since you were breached. What? Do you think I will tolerate such injustice from one I did more to make than Thorbiorn? By the Old Gods, I say no!"

Some of Jarl Harald's followers would have come at Swain for this, but he waved them aside with his bare hand, and went on, his icy-cold, blue eyes boring into the Jarl's dark face.

"Lord Jarl," he said more gently, "your wits have been benumbed by your affection for one who has ceased to merit it. Consider this case fairly. If you give quarter to Thorbiorn after such a crime as he has committed, people will say that he committed it in your interest."

"They will lie," interrupted Jarl Harald.

"Thorbiorn already has told you before us all that what he did was in your interest," exclaimed Jomar.

"It is not true," insisted the Jarl.

"So you say," said Swain, "yet, as I have told you, the people will soon be saying openly that you had plotted Jarl Rognvald's death with Thorbiorn, and arranged it under cover a long time since. They will even say that Thorbiorn quarreled with me

and slew Thorarinn to make pretexts for his falling out with Jarl Rognvald."

Jarl Harald groaned.

"But I would as soon order the death of you, Swain, who, as you have justly said, were the making of me."

"That is so, no doubt, Lord Jarl," pressed Swain, "but you have here the choice between what is right and proper and what will bring down upon you everlasting disgrace and dishonor."

"Will you not at least give Thorbiorn the chance of a fair trial?" asked Jarl Harald. "There may be circumstances——"

"Lord Jarl, if Thorbiorn had a fair trial he would say before your face that he slew Jarl Rognvald by arrangement with you—and how could you deny him, so that people would believe you, after permitting him to escape from this plight that he is in?"

Jarl Harald threw up his hands.

"On your head be it, then, Swain. I will not seek to stop you. Yet I say to you at the last, as I said at the beginning, what useful end will it serve to bring about the slaying of a score or two of men?"

"There will not be anything like so many men slain," replied Swain. "I am not afraid of Thorbiorn."

VII



THORBIORN, on the far side of the moss-hag, had watched closely Swain's dispute with Jarl Harald, and when Swain turned on his heel and left the Jarl the outlaw said to his friends who were grouped around him:

"Sorry was the day I ever quarreled with Swain! He has prevailed upon the Jarl to permit him to attack me."

"Be of a good heart, Thorbiorn," replied Stefan Radgiafi. "If we are only half as numerous as Swain's party none the less we have the moss-hag for defense and most of their spears."

"We will stand by you, Thorbiorn," added Hoskuld the farmer. "Let us all perish together rather than yield to them."

Many others said as much, but certain of the common men in the party shifted their feet and looked uncomfortable. Nor did this escape Thorbiorn's attention.

"You do not know Swain as well as I do," he answered. "I do not hide from myself his cleverness and strength simply because he is my enemy. He is no ordinary warrior."

"Whoever he is, the best thing for us to do is to try to slay him and as many of his people as we can," asserted Stefan.

But Thorbiorn would not agree to this plan.

"I have no desire to be the cause of the deaths of the Kalfadal folk," he said. "Also, I have not altogether despaired of prevailing upon Jarl Harald to grant me quarter."

There was much talk upon this score the while Swain was examining the moss-hag for a place to cross, and the upshot of it was that Hoskuld said that the Kalfadal folk would disperse if Thorbiorn insisted that they should, but he advised the outlaw to flee with them and conceal himself in the woods on the Scots marches. But Thorbiorn refused.

"I have been a chief ever since my youth," he said. "And I do not wish now to become a fugitive. You others shall each do as seems best to you, but as for myself, I shall attempt to evade Swain and throw myself upon Jarl Harald's mercy."

In the meantime Swain had reached a satisfactory place on the bank of the moss-hag some distance from the position held by Thorbiorn and his people, and the Orkney men began to scramble across. Jarl Harald and a few who had remained with him witnessed this advance for several moments in silence, but as the Jarl perceived the ease with which Swain's party won to the far side and the disintegration of the group of Kalfadal folk around Thorbiorn he exclaimed:

"Niddering am I if I do not advance! It will be said that I feared the combat."

And he ran down to the nearest point on the bank of the moss-hag and leaped it in a stride, with his armor clashing on his back. The gap was here nine ells broad,* and of those who followed the Jarl not one cleared the whole distance.

Thorbiorn observed Jarl Harald's leap and he promptly sped over the bog, with his eight housecarls behind him, and cast himself upon his knees at the Jarl's feet.

"See, Lord Jarl," he cried. "I might have made a stout fight against Swain, for the folk with me did not fear the weapon shock, but instead I choose to throw myself upon your mercy."

Harald looked uneasily from the Kalfadal folk streaming away over the moor

* A little more than thirteen feet.

to Swain and the rest of the Orkney men running toward them along the bank of the moss-hag.

"I see not what I can do for you, Thorbiorn," he replied. "My people are very wroth with you for what you have done."

"But kinsman, I lay my head on your knees," pleaded Thorbiorn. "You will not permit Swain to take it from you!"

Certain of Jarl Harald's friends spoke up in Thorbiorn's favor and begged the Jarl to cast his cloak over the outlaw; but the Jarl shook his head.

"Well I know Swain," he said, "and when his mind is set upon a course he can not be diverted from it. If I strove to guard Thorbiorn now Swain would turn his sword against me, and the outcome of that I should not care to estimate."

"Then do you yourself slay me," said Thorbiorn, "for I would rather my punishment came at your hands than from Swain, who is my enemy."

"I can not, Thorbiorn," denied Jarl Harald. "I have not the heart to kill you or to order your death. Flee, and you may get off safe."

Thorbiorn rose slowly to his feet.

"You have as good as ordered my doom, kinsman," he said, "for the spear thrust that Jomar gave me found its way to my entrails and I can not run far."

All Jarl Harald could say to this was:

"Save yourself if you can. My hands are bound."

By now Swain was near enough for the shouts of his people to be heard, so Thorbiorn and the eight men with him made off as best they could. Presently they came to a deserted *shieling* on the hillside, and here Thorbiorn stopped.

"I can run no farther," he said, "and this is as good a place to die as any other. I absolve all of you from your duty to me, and shall not hold it against any man who attempts to escape."

But none of the eight would leave him, and they all went inside the *shieling*, which was very flimsy in its construction, and did what little they could to make it defensible.

When Swain came up he strung a circle of men around the building and ordered Erik Bitling to prepare torches. These torches he flung upon the thatch of the *shieling*, and the whole place was instantly ablaze. Then he drew in his circle closer, with himself, Erik, Jomar and the best-armed

warriors opposite the door through which he expected Thorbiorn to escape. But Thorbiorn instead broke down a section of the wall, and attacked the opposite side of the circle where it was weakest, and he and his house-carls slew four men before Swain reached them.

There was such a rush of battle at this moment that five of Thorbiorn's followers were slain at once, dragging down two more of the Orkney folk with them, and Swain's people drew back for a moment.

"Will you fight me, man to man, Swain?" called Thorbiorn.

"That will I," replied Swain, "although your side is plastered with blood, and there is no glory to be found in slaying a wounded man."

Thorbiorn ran at him without another word, and Swain's folk, so soon as they had finished the three surviving house-carls who had been with Thorbiorn, made a shield-ring and watched the struggle, marveling at the desperation with which the outlaw ward Swain's stoutest blows, although his intestines bulged from the spear-hole in the skirt of his mailed shirt.

Seeing how he panted from his efforts and the blood spurted from his wound, Swain asked him if he would rest himself a while, but Thorbiorn only gritted his teeth and answered:

"No! Slay or be slain."

"That is an excellent spirit, Thorbiorn," approved Swain. "And what I should have expected from a man of your fame and ability. Do you desire to leave any message for your family?"

"Only that I have no sorrow for aught that I have done," croaked Thorbiorn, "and I am glad I put away that slut, Ingrid."

"Humph," grunted Swain. "In that case, we will make an end."

He heaved up his sword with an energy that could not be matched, beat down the outlaw's blade and struck off his head in one quick slash from left to right.

"Take up the head, Erik," he said, "and carry it to Jarl Harald."

Erik gripped Thorbiorn's head by the hair and placed it on a spear.

"What shall I say to the Jarl?" he asked, grinning.

"Tell him that is Swain's justice."

But when Jarl Harald saw Erik coming from afar he went swiftly back across the

moss-hag, sought his horses and rode at speed to Thorsa, where he took ship for Orphir, saying nothing on the way. Swain and the rest of the company followed his route through Caithness, bearing Thorbiorn's head with them. And at every stead, borg and village Swain exhibited his horrid trophy saying:

"This is the head of Thorbiorn Klerk, who was kinsman to Jarl Harald and as great a man in the Orkneyar as any who held no title. He resisted Jarl Rognvald's justice, and foully slew the Jarl without warning. Now I have executed justice upon him."

And the Caithness folk, who knew how Jarl Harald had felt in this matter—for gossip traveled fast across the countryside—grinned as they heard, saying one to another—

"It is Swain's justice to hew off a man's head."

The saying became common in that country, and any man who had lost his head was remarked to have suffered "Swain's Justice."

But Jarl Harald said no word, direct or indirect, of praise or blame for what Swain had done. He did not even send for Swain when he summoned the chiefs and *boendr* of the Islands to notify them that he had succeeded to Jarl's Rognvald's share of the Jarldom. Some of Swain's friends held that this was ominous, and advised him to beware lest Jarl Harald plotted his ruin; but Swain only laughed.

"I shall never suffer by what any Jarl does," he said. "They know me too well."

He bided at home in Gairsey and attended to his own affairs, seldom going abroad and advising all who came to him with news or complaints of what Jarl Harald did that they should go slowly and remember that any sudden change in rulers created misunderstandings which time would remedy.

"Let the Jarl be," he would say. "He is a young man, but he means to deal honestly by us. If he makes mistakes, we shall have opportunity to correct them."

One evening in the Autumn he was sitting alone in his *skalli* when Erik Bitling came to him.

"A longship is pulling into the cove," said the little man, with a queer look. "And Jarl Harald is standing in the prow."

"Tell them in the kitchen that we shall have company, and broach a new barrel of ale," answered Swain.

"I had better bid the folk seek their arms, too," suggested Erik.

"Not if you value my friendship," rejoined Swain.

"The Jarl has never forgiven you for——"

"Peace, Erik. I know Jarl Harald better than you."

So when Jarl Harald entered the *skalli* door in the candle-light, with a score of house-carls following him, he found Swain still sitting alone at the high table and the benches empty.

"I have heard that you keep eighty men at your own charges, Swain," remarked the Jarl after they had exchanged greetings.

"That is true."

"Where are they?"

"They are all weary from their work at the harvest."

"And you bide here by night without house-carls to protect you?"

"Protect me against whom, Lord Jarl?"

Jarl Harald was silent so long as he required to empty an ale-cup.

"I can see that the trouble-makers have been unsuccessful," he said then. "Swain, I have come here to tell you that I have been wrong in holding a grudge against you for Thorbiorn's death. Not a man has opposed me seriously since I became sole Jarl, and I know now that it is because you shielded me from suspicion of being a party to the slaying of Jarl Rognvald."

"That is not to be denied," admitted Swain bluntly.

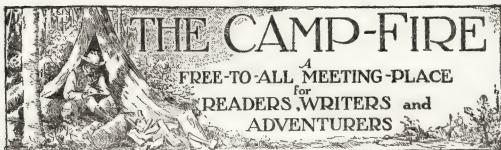
"I was used to relying upon you and Thorbiorn for advice," continued the Jarl. "I hope that you will be willing to assist me as formerly. My task is a great one."

"What I can do for you, Lord Jarl, that will I," replied Swain; "but I shall always say what I think."

Jarl Harald smiled for the first time in months.

"You would not be Swain if you did not," he returned. "What was it Jarl Rognvald was wont to say? 'What is a Jarl or a common man to Swain?'"

And it is to be said that from that day forth Jarl Harald leaned always upon Swain's counsel, and they were friends between whom never came so much as the width of a sword-blade to separate their intercourse.



VERY, very few are the women writers admitted to our writer's brigade. Magda Leigh was admitted along with her first story but rises for the usual introduction to Camp-Fire on the occasion of her second, in this issue:

Santa Monica, California.

I have always had a sincere admiration for the members of Adventure's Camp-Fire, and the invitation to take my place among them has been quite an event to me.

THERE'S not much to say about me. I'm just one of those freaks. I should have been a man, and wasn't. I love the sea and ships far better than anything else in the world, with the exception of my daughter. I like to write of the sea, because it is clean and big. Now that I have the little red-headed mooring-line that keeps me to the shore, I have to do all my seafaring on paper, at my desk. I manage to hike down sixteen blocks, every so often, to see if the Pacific is still there, but my actual voyaging must be vicarious, nowadays, through story characters.

I have to my credit considerably over a hundred thousand miles of sea travel, however. I've been a bloomin' tourist down the Atlantic (I used to have an annual nervous breakdown, for the sake of the trip to Florida); I've sailed the Pacific from San Francisco to Honolulu, and from Panama through Magellan Strait; I know Cape Pillar and have been aground off Cape Hatteras. The Caribbean and I are old pals, and I've been swimming in the Gulf of Paria. I've ventured up the Suriname, the Demerara and Guayas Rivers; and there's scarcely a corner of the West Indies into which I haven't poked my unhandsome but "intellectual" nose.

I HAVE been doing editorial work, free-lancing, criticizing, etc., for years. My short newspaper experience included space work in New York and army and navy stuff in Honolulu. I was editor of *The Seafarer* for the Seaman's Institute, in San Francisco, and also edited *T. K. K. Topics*, for the Toyo Kisen Kaisha, in that same city. For a year or so, I was a silent member of the staff of *Our Navy* magazine. Whatever else may be my faults, I am at least consistent in my love for whatever relates to the sea.

Not that I haven't hit the high spots ashore—even as high as 14,000 feet above sea level, in Bolivia. (What I never suffered in sea-sickness, I made up in mountain-sickness, too!)

The strange part of it all is that I've never been ship-wrecked. I've been through a South American revolution (I adored it!), and any number of earthquakes, and even plague, but the sea has treated me kindly.

The finest thing that has happened to me, literally speaking, has been breaking into *Adventure*. It took me six years to do it, and I still have a letter from one of the editors, dated 1917, rejecting a story I then offered, in which he said "You have the spirit to win." I am glad I have been able to prove him not mistaken.—MAGDA LEIGH.

AN EDITORIAL in *Army Ordnance* against the anti-weapon campaign to disarm decent citizens while crooks and Bolsheviks keep supplied with weapons contains, among other strong arguments, the following:

Thus another clumsy attempt is being made to remedy the abuse of a right by prohibiting its use. Assuming such a law upon the statute books, its mantle of protection would fall chiefly upon the criminally minded. The respectable law-abiding citizens would obey it and go unarmed; the burglar and the bandit would ply their trades with added security and, of course, with no more respect for the anti-pistol law than for the others they are flaunting.

A really effective remedy against the use of the pistol for illegitimate purposes would be to punish this use. Certainly a bandit who carries a pistol has it in his possession for other purposes than self-defense. Let the possession of a pistol by a person who commits or attempts to commit a felony be presumptive evidence of an intent to use the pistol in support of his crime. A mandatory sentence of say five years for this intent in addition to the normal penalty for the crime would go far toward making "pistol toting" by criminals unwise and would leave the respectable citizen free to defend himself in accordance with his constitutional guarantee. The oft worked "police power" could doubtless be made to cover this case.

FORTUNATELY, the proposed bill has an obstacle to overcome that may be insurmountable. The Constitution of the United States provides "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." It is hoped that there are evidences of at least a slight return to the old-fashioned respect in which our ancestors held the Constitution. The pertinent examples of the

chaotically governed countries of Russia and China can not help but give pause to those whose respect for principles slowly forged out upon the anvil of time is less than their confidence in a boundless egotism.

THERE is another angle to the situation, also, which is of particular concern to the development of ordnance and to industrial preparedness.

The blow that the enactment of the proposed law would deal to the art of ordnance is obvious. The art must be kept alive if our status as a nation is to be maintained. It is already finding difficulty in surviving both from the military and from the civilian points of view. The total appropriation this year for the entire Ordnance Department is slightly more than five and one-half million dollars; in 1910—certainly a normal pre-war year—the Department received over ten million dollars to carry on its work. Whether the importance of the question is not understood, or whether there is a misconception of facts we do not know; but one thing is certain: the art of arms must not be allowed to die nor be legislated out of existence.

The principle involved, the right at stake, and the freedom of the individual and the nation demand a proper realization of the principles concerned and of the necessary steps to safeguard them.

The Great War didn't teach this nation much of anything. The above example of a national defense factor made half as strong after the war as it was before is a case in point. Ask the politicians why—the politicians and the other worshipers of the party system developed until party has become more important to them than country.

IT'S been so long since I've met our old friends the glass-snake, the hoop-snake and the rest of them that when the first named comes crawling out of our Camp-Fire cache I greet him warmly:

The Star, St. Louis, Missouri.

Here is something about the glass snake that may interest Camp-Fire:

A MAN I have long known as honest and reliable in conversation recently mentioned that he saw a glass snake in the cemetery at Piedmont, Mo., last spring. He and a friend were out for a walk. The friend threw a stone at the snake and hit it, and it broke in three pieces, each of which made off in different directions. My informant, who prefers to remain nameless, said that only the head end of the snake seemed to know where it was bound and that the other two segments moved aimlessly although they traveled more than could be accounted for as mere serpentine writhing. The segments, he averred, fitted each into another much the same as a jointed fishing rod.

My friend said that D. R. Thomas, a Piedmont merchant, frequently has seen these snakes which are from one to two feet long, slim and without any obvious markings.

Interested, I consulted the dictionary, Webster's unabridged. Eminent disputants to the contrary, here is what I found—

"Glass snake—a limbless lizard (*Ophisaurus Ventralis*), of the southern United States, superficially resembling a snake;—so called from its fragility, the tail easily breaking into small pieces; also applied to similar species found in the Old World. They are perfectly harmless."—H. T. M.

THERE were many more stories told of *Swain* and your strong liking for those told us thus far by Arthur D. Howden Smith seem full warrant for his going back into the past for more of them. "Swain's Justice" in this issue brings to us again this sturdy old adventurer.

HERE are two interesting bits from an American newspaper of 1833 and something about the exploring by one of our comrades of the crater of Mt. Popa in Upper Burma:

Pittsburgh.

I have just returned to America after an absence of five and one half years, having been in Upper Burma, India. In going through some old papers etc., I have found an old newspaper printed March 21, 1833, at Clearfield Town, Clearfield Co., Penn., and named the *Clearfield Banner*. It contains an item which I think should be taken note of, as it is a link in the historical events of before, during and after the Revolutionary War and the same article might not be found easily again. I think the data contained in the article may prove of interest to that excellent student of American Colonial history, Hugh Pendexter. I will thank you if you will pass the enclosed copy of the article on to him and let him use his own judgment as to its value.

I have written to the Curator of the State Museum of Pennsylvania at Harrisburg asking him to accept the old paper as well as some other articles of historical value which are in possession of myself and all handed down to me from ancestors and if the Museum accepts the articles the newspapers will be available there for reference.

An exact copy of the article follows:

"LONGEVITY,—Died, at Columbia co. Va. "Captain Thomas Cobb, aged 120 years! He "was a Captain under Washington, and marched "against the forts on the Kanawha, then in the "possession of the French and Indians, several "years before the defeat of Braddock. When 100 "years of age, he frequently rode from 40 to 45 "miles in a day; only 4 years ago, he rode to Augusta, "40 miles in one day.

The above being copied from the 15th issue of the *Clearfield Banner*, Thursday, March 21, 1833, printed in Clearfield Town, Clearfield Co., Penn., by M. Brown and W. L. More, Editors and Publishers.

ANOTHER article which is of some interest to Americans who are wide awake appears in this same paper. It reflects the true American spirit and the desire to maintain the States as they were intended to be by the men of the days of Patrick Henry. I will give you an exact copy of the article as it appears, but unfortunately a few

words are not readable on account of the paper having been folded and the printed words lost:

TO ALL REAL AND TRUE AMERICANS

"Don't give up the ship."

"Disappointed ambition leads to resentment"

"led to lend themselves as tools to distract the country and lay waste the land!"

"Washington, as by a *Patriarchal influence* spake of such CHARACTERS & TIMES! Hence, be advised to consider anyone, who would seek to divide the nation, as an ENEMY—and should be dealt with accordingly!"

"If blood must be shed, let it fall on the TRANS-GRESSORS!" "For judgment must begin at the house of God."

"MARK WELL," all THOSE who are bent to ruin the country and sink the ship! That when the struggle comes, justice may take place to save the people!

"He that hath no sword, let him buy one! & be prepared for the worst; against TRAITORS (whether native or adopted citizens)—ambitious intriguing FOREIGNERS, who are bent on mischief in the Nation, to seek our harm and RUIN! Take Warning! for the day to "try men's souls" is at hand!—hence may God give us wisdom and "protection!"

signed LORENZO DOW.

"P.S. The Edit. throughout the United States. ore have an insertion. L.D.

Montville, Feb. 28.

I MUST tell you, before I close this letter, that I have had the satisfaction of exploring the crater of the extinct volcano, Mt. Popa, in the Meiktila District of Upper Burma with an Eastman Kodak, Winchester .401 rifle and 60 ft., of 3/4-inch rope last December, just before leaving Burma. This crater is supposed to have never been entered before by a white man. I have a good collection of pictures and data and a few specimens of the geological formation of the mountain. I also located a fine vein of what I am told is first class jet, on the west side of the mountain, at an elevation of about 3500 ft. I also climbed the wall of the crater, from the bottom to within 25 ft. of the top, a distance of about 2000 ft., but had to give up at that point as the rim was straight up and down and I could not get up with the facilities at hand. That was a disappointment, but the only one on the trip. Next time I try a similar performance I will be better prepared.

I am expecting to leave for South America in a short time and am looking forward to a new stamping-ground with a keenness.—HILAND R. SMITH.

QUITE some little time ago I printed in "Camp-Fire" an account of the work and methods of the Central Committee on Enforcing Public Opinion, a local organization doing good work in New York City and one that ought to be developed into a national body. In fact, through the publishing of its program in our "Camp-Fire"

it has already taken up an issue of national importance.

One of the Camp-Fire comrades who read it was William Cunningham, a military prisoner in Ft. Leavenworth. Having found useless all other methods of righting the wrongs he felt had been done to him, he seized upon this slender thread of hope brought into his cell by Camp-Fire.

He wrote to the address given for the Committee. William Keating, its executive secretary, was so impressed by Cunningham's statement that, with the Committee's endorsement, he began a thorough investigation of the case that lasted about a year and involved tremendous detailed labor. That investigation left him not only convinced of Cunningham's innocence but white-hot with indignation against what he believed to be a brutal and cowardly frame-up against Cunningham by Army officers whose systematic and wholesale theft of Government property Cunningham had uncovered as an investigator acting under orders.

IF MR. KEATING'S belief is correct, our Camp-Fire has been the means of bringing to light rottenness so great and so far-reaching that its discovery will shake the whole Army organization and the Administration itself, rivaling the famous Dreyfus case and leaving the nation aghast at the criminal corruption that has flourished in its midst. If Mr. Keating's belief is not correct, it will need far more than the seemingly perfunctory official investigations reported at the date of this writing early in December to prove that it is incorrect.

Indeed, the factor that perhaps does most to earn credence for Mr. Keating's belief is that in all this time the Government authorities have neither proved to the satisfaction of disinterested investigators the justice of Cunningham's court-martial sentence and the innocence of the Army officers concerned nor established his innocence and the ugly guilt of criminals who tramped him into the mire to save their own skins. Whichever party is the guilty one, the innocent party deserves proof of its innocence. The War Department and the Administration as a whole, by their failure to bring out the final and irrefutable facts of the case after having had it presented again and again to their attention, have followed a policy that in the nature of things will give

'rise to charges of "covering up," "white-washing," "playing politics," etc., that, whether justified or not, will work serious harm to them, to the cause of national defense and to the morals of the nation at large.

There follows a statement of the case taken from the *Washington Post* of October 31st:

A mass of affidavits charging a gigantic "frame-up" in the conviction by court-martial in 1920 of William Cunningham, the highest ranking non-commissioned officer in the United States army, on charges of theft at Kelly field, Texas, and counter charging high army officials with serious crimes, is being investigated by the judge advocate generals' department of the army, it was learned yesterday.

CUNNINGHAM is serving a 10-year sentence at Leavenworth Prison. At the completion of the first year of his sentence last February, clemency was not recommended for Cunningham by the judge advocate general nor by the Secretary of War.

The affidavits which led to a new investigation of the case were submitted to the War Department by the Central Committee of Public Opinion, Brooklyn, and were signed by William Keating, secretary of a committee which made an independent investigation of the circumstances surrounding the thefts and the conviction.

THE principal charges which the affidavits make follow:

1. The existence at Kelly field in 1919 and 1920 of a "theft ring" composed of high ranking officers who stole goods valued at \$2,000,000 from the air service.
2. The "frame-up" of Cunningham, who was sent to "clean up" the ring.
3. Brutal treatment of Cunningham when imprisoned, which caused him to lose his eyesight and several teeth, and suffer a broken shoulder.
4. Imprisonment in solitary confinement of Cunningham, until the start of the court-martial.
5. The theft from Cunningham's trunk of reports on the "theft ring," which Cunningham was to have submitted to the War Department.
6. The "planting" of stolen goods in Cunningham's room by officers who are named in the affidavit.
7. Corruption of the court-martial which tried Cunningham.
8. Irregularities in the treatment of Cunningham while he was a prisoner at Leavenworth Prison.
9. Violation of their oaths of office by the judges of the court-martial and by the judge advocate.
10. The admittance of perjury at the trial and its nonpunishment.

ACCORDING to the affidavits filed with the War Department, repeated efforts have been made to reopen the case and obtain either a pardon or clemency for Cunningham by members of Congress and other prominent persons, but none of the efforts have been successful because, it was alleged, "a major general and other high officials had to be protected."

"Cunningham, according to all reports, is now a

physical wreck," Mr. Keating stated in his affidavits. "His condition is even more precarious. His life is at stake." In preparing the affidavits which were submitted to the War Department, it was stated, the entire court-martial record was studied, and additional affidavits obtained from nine persons. Many other persons were interviewed regarding the case, and 459 other documents were examined, the correspondence reaching into eight States and the District of Columbia.

THE investigation by the committee came upon the following general facts, it was stated:

"William Cunningham when in the employ of the Federal government was ordered by the War Department to get on the track of wholesale thefts and robberies committed by other Federal employes and civilians at Kelly field.

"While doing this duty he was 'framed up' by said Federal employes and certain higher officials when they found themselves discovered and cornered.

"Cunningham was thereupon railroaded to ten years of hard labor to cover up the robberies of the thieves and the connivance at their crimes of officials higher up, who either participated in the crimes or shielded the perpetrators.

"Vain appeals for a retrial or a pardon were then made by the following persons: Mrs. J. MacColl of the Department of Justice; Representatives Guy L. Shaw, Alice M. Robertson, William W. Wilson, A. L. Kline, Charles Pope Caldwell, John I. Nolan and Daniel R. Anthony, Jr., and others."

THE affidavit then purports to refute the charges of theft which were lodged against Cunningham by quoting the court-martial record and the additional affidavits obtained by the committee.

A charge of assisting Sergt. Jack Rote to escape from guards, which also was placed against Cunningham, is refuted in the affidavit by the insertion of an affidavit supposedly signed by Rote, in which he denies that he had been aided, and that when he learned that Cunningham had been arrested on such a charge, he returned voluntarily. The affidavit, it is alleged, was never introduced at the trial, although it had been placed in the hands of Cunningham's accusing counsel.

In describing the conditions which Cunningham was said to have found at Kelly field, the affidavit quoted the official investigator, who stated: "Somebody got away with about two or three million dollars worth of Air Service property. There were involved two majors, two captains, four lieutenants and five sergeants. Somebody is protecting these crooks and shielding a major general."

The affidavit then names the officers who were declared to be in the "theft ring."

OF CUNNINGHAM'S record in the army and his personal life, the following facts are given: "William Cunningham, sergeant, master signal electrician and aviation instructor, ranking as the highest non-commissioned officer in the army, was born in Mount Vernon, N. Y., in 1881. Two of his ancestors were signers of the Declaration of Independence, Cunningham served in the army in Cuba, Mexico and the Philippines.

"He enlisted in the army during the world war, October 24, 1916. Served in England and France. The late Franklin K. Lane, his personal friend,

made it possible for him to get in the Signal Corps, aviation section.

"He took part in the second battle of the Marne: was wounded four times in France and also gassed; was presented by Gen. Petain with a gold fountain pen in the presence of 300 French officers; received the *croix de guerre* with palm leaf attached, and was honorably discharged October 28, 1919, with character excellent. He reenlisted the same day.

"January 9, 1920, Col. Archie Miller gave Capt. Field E. Kindley and Cunningham instructions to clean up Kelly Field and round up the crooks there. Kindley was shot and Cunningham was left alone to carry out Miller's orders."

Here is either a mare's nest or a scandal so tremendous and so rotten that it is difficult to foresee the total of its results. Above all, here is a case to which there can be no end until the real facts, not the whitewashed ones, are found and made public to the last detail. In the event that the Keating charges are proved sound, if the War Department can see here no more important necessity than the covering up of guilty officers, no matter how high their rank, for the "good of the service," then it is high time that we had a new War Department and that the present one be held to justice for protection of criminals.

IT IS possible that in this investigation we of Camp-Fire can be of further direct help. Undoubtedly some of us have been or are in Leavenworth, as prisoners, guards, or in other capacities. What are the facts as to treatment of prisoners there? Did that treatment change suddenly for the better when it became known to those in charge of the prison that the Cunningham case was being really investigated by an unprejudiced outside agency? Have you been in any way connected with this case? Have you definite facts bearing on it? Do you know any one who has? Can you testify to facts making clear the character of any one concerned in it? In particular, do you know of any suppression of evidence in this case or any sequestration or intimidation of or tampering with witnesses?

If you can further the finding of the whole truth, it is your very solemn duty to do so and to do so in the full understanding that, if the Keating charges are true, you may thereby yourself become subject to sequestration or intimidation as a witness. (I might mention what is probably purely a coincidence that the copy of what I am saying here, together with the *Post* article, disappeared between two floors of our build-

ing and has never come to light.) It is no time for either cowardice or silence. Too much is at stake, and, if the charges are true, it is cowardice that has been the chief factor in suppressing the truth thus far. If you have any scrap of real evidence to offer, stand on your two feet and offer it. Theories and hearsay are of no value, but if you have facts of which you are sure and to which you will take oath, send them to William Keating, Central Committee on Enforcing Public Opinion, 391 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, New York.

On the general iniquity and abuse of the Army court martial system testimony can be collected by the bale. Such testimony is not needed at this writing. The time for it will come, must come.

I READ the Keating affidavit in full, not just the summary given above. At the end of it I was so sick with shame and anger at even the possibility that such outrages, such treachery and such treason could live and flourish in an American army that I could not stay in the office. I pray that Mr. Keating's charges can be proved to have no foundation. If they are true, then there is a very considerable list of Army officers who belong behind bars or against a wall and a very bitter need of ruthless investigation into the War Department up to and including the Secretary of War and extending to any of, or outside, the Administration who may have been instrumental in having stayed the execution of justice thus long.

AN INTERESTING letter from the principal of a boy's academy in China, replying to statements of another comrade as to Chinese ability to pronounce the letter "r":

McPhersons Boys' Academy
Ichowfu, Shantung, China.

Comrades of the Camp-Fire: May I come from the shadows long enough to say my say and then return? I have followed Camp-Fire discussions for many years, and have wished I had something to add to the interest.

Comrade W. J. Sherwood makes a few remarks about the Chinese language which I read with interest, but can not entirely agree with. The part that I take exception to is his statement about the use of *r*—or rather the lack of any *r* in the Chinese language.

HAVING lived in Shantung for more than ten years, and using the vernacular constantly in my work, I do know something about the dialect in this Province. What it may be in the south, I

do not know. China is too big a country and too oriental to generalize about safely. Now as to the *r*.

In the dialect of this place, there are *r*'s in use, e. g., the word for *man* in the dialect here is *ren*—just that. This sound is also used in varying inflections for other meanings. There is also a sound of *ring*, pronounced *roong*, meaning "glory," etc. Still another is *ru*, meaning "enter," etc. Still others might be given, but these are enough. The enclitic, *er*, is a very common sound in the language, being tacked on to nouns, in Shantung, and in Peking even to verbs. For example, *i pen shu* (ee ben shoe) means "a book" but is usually given *i pe'r shu*, that is, the *n* of the *pen* and the *e* of the *er* are elided, and pronounced as written—*ber*. *Er* standing alone means "son," but is used in diminutives and in other ways too numerous for this letter.

AS TO the unwise challenge by Comrade Sherwood, there is a town on the Grand Canal, not far from here, which is commonly called, by the natives *Tai'er-chwang* (*Tai-er-djwang*). The *r* is very prominent. About seventy li below this town is another called *Tai-er-shang*. Then what about some of the Manchurian cities, like *Tsi-Tsi-har* and *Har-bin*. They are pronounced by the Chinese—at least those around here, without any trouble, and *r* is prominent.

As I have taught Chinese boys to speak English for some years, I state decidedly that there is not the slightest trouble in teaching them to use *r* properly. Final *i* is the sound they have difficulty in speaking. As I have said, however, I speak for Shantung and the north, only, as I have not been south of the Yangtse River and therefore am not competent to speak for that district.

In closing may I make a plea for the use of "Chinese" instead of "Chinaman?" The Chinese object, and rightly, to the latter, and the former is more correct, from any standpoint. *Adios*—K. K. THOMPSON.

A WORD from Frank Robertson concerning his story in this issue:

Salt Lake City, Utah.

There'll probably be fellows rise up and say that such sheep shearing can't be done. I've worked in and around shearing corrals for years and I know that it's remarkable shearing, but not sensational. Many shearers have done better than Owen Davis's best mark of 250. The hard part of his task was to hold to an average of over two hundred a day month after month—yet other men have done it. The details as to prices, crew, etc., are, of course, correct.

I have often wondered why the American sheep-shearers have been so neglected in fiction. With the possible exception of the lumber-jacks, there is no class of men who work so hard while they are employed. Twenty to thirty dollars a day is no unusual earning, and mostly they are a hard fighting, hard drinking, poker-playing outfit. They are not to be confused with sheep-herders. Few shearers ever herd. They are a distinct class.

So far as I know no prize or bonus was ever offered as I have it in the story, but plenty of sheepmen have offered bonuses for single corrals and short runs.

Best wishes to *Adventure* and the Camp-Fire bunch.—FRANK ROBERTSON.

BROADCASTING for some old-timer who may have crossed his trail. There is certainly trail enough for quite a number to have crossed it:

Newport Beach, California.

"I was young and now I am old," said some one, I do not remember who. However, I have just finished reading *Adventure*. As I turned the last page there was a misty cloud through which I glimpsed the trail of years that have gone and the faces of those who bore me company. Full fifty years have slipped into the great beyond since I, a boy of fifteen, went forth from my father's farm in Nova Scotia on a trail that would carry on through full forty years.

AND now I am sort of "broadcasting." Let me pick up the trail at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and follow it to Montreal with the 60th Rifles; thence to Thunder Bay and over lake and portage to Lake Winnipeg; thence to Fort Garry, on the Red River of the North at the mouth of the Assiniboine; thence with Chief Fleming to explore the Rocky Mountains for a feasible pass for the proposed Canadian Pacific Railway, and on to the Pacific; sailed from where Vancouver stands today for Victoria; then on down the coast to San Francisco; on again to the Isthmus and across and on again to New York; thence to St. Paul, Minn., and from there back to Fort Garry.

A SIX-MONTHS' rest and the trail leads on. I am an employee of the Hudson Bay Company and go to Fort Edmonton, a thousand miles west, and in the following spring move on to Slave Lake of the North, where the trail halts for three years; then back to Edmonton; a season of bar mining on the Saskatchewan; then down the river to a branch called Battle River, where I built a trade cabin and hunted, or rather killed, buffalo and poisoned wolves. From that the trail led south to Fort Benton, in Montana. Bullwhacked from Benton to Helena one season; became a sheep-herder, then boss. Then a trip to California and the buying of 3,500 sheep at San Bernardino, and drove them across the Desert to Salt Lake and thence to Montana.

A year or so and then a blizzard came that way one day and the sheep were driven by it over a cliff into a narrow ravine, where they piled up a hundred deep and I went out of the sheep business forever. I became a newspaper man, and published the *Sun* River *Sun* at a place called Sun River, 20 miles north of the present town of Great Falls. My paper still survives, under the name of *Great Falls Tribune*. To Chicago; married. Back to California; north to Portland, Ore.; to Seattle; to Scagway, Alaska, the day that "Soapy Smith" died.

A SNOW slide in White Horse Pass discouraged me; back to Seattle and on to San Francisco; into Lower California, Mexico, mining; broke after some years, Los Angeles; a colony in Mexico, State of Sinaloa, West Coast; City of Mexico. Old Porter Hotel. Exploring the ancient ruins of Metla, Yucatan. Ran the Balsas River from village of Balsas to Zacatula on the Pacific north of Acapulco. Overland to Tepec, on to Guadalajara. Prospected the north side of the Sierra de Nayarit Mountains;

on to Durango; to Paral, Chihuahua, El Paso. Tucson, Ariz. Mining again in the Avawatz Mountains on the edge of Death Valley. Los Angeles, and here ends the trail so far.

This broadcasting is to see if I can locate some old-timer who may have been on the same trail or crossed it. I thank you.—BYRON HALL.

SOME time ago at Camp-Fire we asked you to help a bit in educating the class of people who, without any examination or knowledge of the magazine's contents, dismiss it as a "cheap-paper, popular fiction magazine" that couldn't possibly have in it anything that would interest them. They were, in large part, a natural audience for *Adventure*, and reaching them was one of its chief problems. More and more it's been getting new readers from this class; and right here I wish to thank you for your hearty, friendly response and for the good results already visible.

There will, however, still be need of this "educative" campaign for some time to come, for there are always many who form opinions from externals without real knowledge and who must have facts thrust upon them before they will really examine into things for themselves. So here are a few more facts.

WE'VE already published several lists of *Adventure* stories that later appeared in book form, and the letters coming in, even letters from old readers, have shown surprise at both the length and the quality of those lists and of the standing of *Adventure* authors when thus collected and presented.

Some one suggested that, to squelch the idea that this is a magazine for only the lowest brows, it might help a little to advance the fact that its editors are not morons and should at least on the face of things have average knowledge of what is good fiction, even "literary" fiction, and what is not. Naturally it's hard to find data to establish any such case, but the following bits of fact may help a little.

There are seven of us men on the office editorial staff, and in the thirteen and a half years of the magazine there have been others. Among them the following have published in book-form (or have books in process of publication): Sinclair Lewis, William Ashley Anderson, Elmer Davis, L. Patrick Greene, Ernest Frank Brace—all fiction books; non-fiction books

by Elon Jessup and two by me. The publishers of these are: Harper's; Little, Brown; Harcourt, Brace; Bobbs, Merrill; McBride and, I think, Houghton, Mifflin. (The facts here given are merely collected from data now in the office; we've made no effort to draw up a list in full detail.) It doesn't, of course, follow that *Adventure* is therefore on a high literary basis, but the list in general certainly indicates that the magazine can not be jauntily dismissed, without examination, as beneath the notice of people who read "Main Street," "Babbitt" and the books of some of the others. (Since the above was written "A Conqueror Passes," by Larry Barretto of our staff, has been put on sale and greeted with about as splendid a collection of reviews as any of us can remember falling to the lot of a first book. We're mightily proud of Barretto's accomplishment, so won't risk saying any more except that its sales seem to warrant our feeling of pride.)

IT WOULD probably surprise some of these haughty ones to learn that any of *Adventure's* editors had had college education. Some of them have; some not. The point is of no great importance, but here is an off-hand, incomplete, but accurate list of the colleges and schools attended by past and present members of our editorial staff (a degree taken in practically all cases; some of the men attending more than one college):

Yale (2), University of Pennsylvania, Franklin, Oxford, England (Rhodes Scholar), University of Minnesota (2), New York University (3), Hamilton, Hoosac School, Columbia (3), University of California, Wellesborough School (England), Princeton, Ohio State, University of Chicago, Oberlin, University of Dijon (France), University of Virginia, Tulane, Harvard, Amherst (2), Middleboro, Dartmouth. Two Phi Beta Kappa men are included.

LEST this list arouse the hostility of those who consider all college graduates a total loss, let me hasten to add that we are not of the long-haired variety and that to quite a number of us college is something pretty far back in the past. Nor have we leaped from college to office chair. From what data are available without effort

we find that editors of *Adventure* have been also: farm-hand, riveter, seaman, day laborer (2), stock-salesman, gas-meter reader, stevedore, life-insurance agent, British South African Police, dry-goods clerk, ad writer, movie actor, bookkeeper, laboratory technician, reporter (4), ticket seller, janitor, oil-driller, sword-fisher, news-butcher. Among the staff veterans (Army and Navy) are two aviators; one editor saw considerable field medical service in the Balkan War; another served through the British East African campaign of the Great War.

Geographical areas pretty well known to various members or ex-members of the staff—known, that is, from the general point of view of adventure instead of merely tourist knowledge—are: East Africa, South Africa, Madagascar, Abyssinia, China, Mongolia and of course Europe. So far as ordinary travel is concerned, the list includes the U. S. (virtually all), Canada, West Indies, Mexico, Central America, South America, Morocco, most of Europe parts of Asia.

NO, WE'RE not high-brows, but it doesn't follow that the editors of *Adventure* aren't as able to judge literary values as are a good many of those who superciliously judge *Adventure's* stories without reading them.

It's pretty sad work to sit up and bray at length about ourselves in this fashion, but bear in mind we've listened for over thirteen years to sniffs from people who not only have even less to bray about but are passing haughty judgment on a magazine they haven't read. This is the first time we've even peeped a protest on a personal basis.

AS TO the magazine itself, we know that all its stories are not "literature" by either classical or generally accepted tests, nor are all of them perfect for the particular purposes of this particular magazine. But, laying aside such tests of merit as quality of paper, what people think without examining, etc., we know enough to know that *Adventure* prints sufficient really good fiction to earn a place alongside many of the magazines the sniffers cling to as literary Bibles.

Adventure makes no attempt to create a literary "atmosphere" around itself. There

are plenty of easy mechanical devices for creating such atmosphere. Our magazine is not interested in them or in it. *Adventure* knows the conventional, formal requirements of "literature" as well as most magazines know them—well enough to know when they can be disregarded in part or whole for the sake of the vital qualities upon which literature is really dependent. *Adventure* knows the technique (if I may prostitute the word to that purpose) of selecting or remodeling fiction so that it may glitter with surface cleverness and the wordy flow of "style" (God save the mark) that to so large a part of the American reading public stand as the hall-marks of "polished" writing. It has no interest in these things. *Adventure* knows that it can increase both its circulation and its "literary" standing by the simple and much used expedients of casting a scholarly cloak over sex indecency and laxity of morals in general or over the kind of "realism" whose only claim to attention is the amount of filth it can bring to light from its needless wallowing in the gutter. *Adventure* has no interest in the cloak or in the moral rottenness and lack of literary merit the cloak attempts to conceal.

ADVENTURE is interested only in giving good stories to clean-minded people who can think for themselves. Its accomplishment does not come up to its standard, but both its accomplishment and its standard are constantly seeking a higher level. It asks only to be judged by what it has, not by what non-examiners think it has.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS



Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs that Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure Magazine* by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for general information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections.

subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and full postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualification and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAN BROWN, 1624 Bigelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (See next section.)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Adventure. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESBERG, 3533 New Hampshire Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Adventure. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (See next section.)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups

CHARLES BELL EMBERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Peilding Star*, Peilding, New Zealand.

Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (Postage two cents.)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumotu, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).

CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania
FRANK MORTON, care *Triad* magazine, 19 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (Postage ten cents.)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (Postage ten cents.)

11. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 714 Marquette Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting,

★ (Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached)

13. Japan

GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, Morgan City, La. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan

GORDON MACCREACH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters

CAPTAIN C. L. OLIVER, P. O. Box 2882, Tampa, Fla. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan

GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

18. Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria

ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo

CHARLES BEADLE, care of Kansas Direct Service, 44 Rue d'Hauteville, Paris, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (Postage 12 cents.)

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. ★ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfit, health, etc. (Postage 3 cents.)

22. Africa Part 5 Morocco

GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, Morgan City, La. Including the S-hara. Turkeys and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravaning.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan

W. T. MOFFAT, Sudan Customs, Sinkat, Red Sea Province, Sudan, Africa. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (Postage 3 cents.)

26. Turkey and Asia Minor

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

27. Bulgaria, Roumania

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

28. Albania

ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

29. Jugo-Slavia and Greece

LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

30. Scandinavia

ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland

FRED F. FLEISCHER, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

32. Great Britain

THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

33. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

34. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil

WILLIAM K. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at

57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

35. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

36. Central America

CHARLES H. EMERSON, *Adventure* Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

37. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

38. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California: Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

39. ★ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern

S. E. SANGSTER, ("Canuck"), L. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (Postage 3 cents.)

40. ★ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario

HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (Postage 3 cents.)

41. ★ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario

GEORGE L. CATTON, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. Postage 3 cents.)

42. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District

T. P. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

43. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta

ED. L. CARSON, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel: customs regulations.

44. ★ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin

REECE H. HAGUE, The Pass, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (Postage 3 cents.)

45. ★ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec

JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (Postage 3 cents.)

46. Alaska

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

47. Baffinland and Greenland

VICTOR SHAW, 2933 W. 25th Ave., Denver, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

48. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. HARRMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish, camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

49. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance, oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

50. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

FRANK MIDDLETON, 509 Fremont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

51. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains

CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

52. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

R. T. Newman, care of Anaconda Copper Mining Co. Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants

53. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

54. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (late Capt. A. E. F.), care Adventure. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of Adventure. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming; mining and range lands; big-timber sections. 56. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of Adventure. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

GEO. A. ZEKER, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel, history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (See next section.)

58. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan

and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

59. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care Adventure. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care Adventure. Okefenokee and Dismal, Ocranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fish Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghenies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobilism, national forests, general information.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD McNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, 2933 W. 25th Ave., Denver, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practice; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it; how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished songs and for answering questions concerning all species of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers,

cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyagers, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1263 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of Adventure.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphance varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of Adventure. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fish Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. P. FLEISCHER, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. United States: Military history; Military policy, National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. Foreign: Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. General: Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except those as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

I.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

J.—STANDING INFORMATION

For Camp-Fire Stations write J. Cox, care Adventure.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Dept. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiver-ships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 75 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C. National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C. United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRILL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Austin, Tex.

It used to be my ambition to become a writer of fiction; and with this object in view I followed in the footsteps of Johnson, Poe and other authors by keeping a note-book with me in my work and travels and keeping notes of interesting things and happenings. In this way I have collected data on first one subject and another for several years.

I have been one of the editors of "*Ask Adventure*" since the early part of 1917. I do not remember just when I was accepted, as the letters I received in those days were very few and far between and I did not keep a list of them.

Off and on I have spent four years in Mexico, going from one place to another, trying to learn all about the country. I had an idea of some day using this collected data in writing stories about that republic.

I have spent several years in the Rio Grande Valley surveying routes for canals, building irrigating-ditches, establishing town-sites, laying off streets—in the northern part of the State helping to build State highways, paving streets, etc. Nothing very thrilling about this kind of work ordinarily. Occasionally some irate "mossback" property owner would want the route changed from going across his property to that of his neighbors and often would bring along his shotgun to enforce his demand.

School-teaching has been another stepping-stone in my career. Had five years of this kind of work. About the only thing that I have to show for this training is the controlling of my temper and the development of patience.

Ranching and stock-raising has another notch cut in my stick. Have studied farming and ranching from all angles and knew something about the game before I entered into it. Have been in that business for about eight years now.

It was during my leisure hours on the ranch that I had the idea of trying to get in with the *Adventure* magazine, for I could see from the first issue of the magazine that there was going to be a big future for it. I was successful in my attempt and then began answering questions and writing stories—still have the stories stored away some place.

It was about this time that my assistance was needed in France. I turned my notes, etc., over to my sister and told her to do the best she could in answering the questions after I left the United States—so I dropped everything and with quite a number of other boys toured France on foot from one sector to another until I had been in six lively engagements. Was gassed three times, had a couple of dugouts caved in on me, was knocked down and buried with dirt thrown from exploding G. I. cans, and never so much as received a scratch; so all the stripes that I can show are two service stripes and

those of a sergeant. We were within three miles of Metz when the armistice was signed; and it took me from then until June, 1919, to get out of the Army.

Since my discharge I have added another notch to my stick by getting one year's credit in a chiropractic college for my two years of medical training, and with two years' study of chiropractic I have developed into a full-fledged chiropractor.

About the only thing that I claim to be an expert on is the human mechanism, but that is of no benefit to *Adventure*, so we will pass on to something else. I know a great deal about ranching and farming down in this neck of the woods, something about mining, history, some of the industries, topography, climate, etc., of Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma as I have been over these sections several times; it is a habit of mine to learn all that is possible to be learned quickly about everything of interest with which I come in contact.—J. W. WHITEAKER.

Codrington, Ont., Canada.

Born and spent the first seventeen years of my simple existence right here. Went West and spent another twenty, helping develop prairie-land, during which time I rambled over all our West and the most of yours. Then spent three years in England in the interests of immigration, came back and located in Quebec, where I put in ten very happy years.

In that time I visited all the territory covered by me in *Adventure*, and have shot and fished over a great deal of it. During this period I spent four years in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

I have made many trips through the length and breadth of Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; have seen a great deal but not all of Newfoundland, as well as the Labrador coast.

I am a professional man. But always have wanted to see what was on the other side of the ridge.

What I have done has been for my own pleasure, not in a business way. Although some of my experiences have been pretty vital too. I have homesteaded, cut the logs and built my own house and stables. Killed deer when missing them meant going hungry. Eaten pea-soup in lumber-camps—mighty good too—caught cod off the shores, and salmon and trout in the rivers of N. B. and N. S.

There is a great future before this district, and it should be better known. It is a real game-preserve. It has timber, minerals, water-power, good land, historic traditions. All it needs is capital and energy. Some day it will come into its own.—JAMES F. B. BELFORD.

Denver, Colo.

Hiked alone through hills of western Massachusetts on a geologizing trip when sixteen years old.

Hunted, fished, canoed and even guided in northern Maine every year from 1891 to 1896, staying some years for six to eight months; in between times canoed and hunted the wild sections of upper Charles River.

R. W. Porter and self organized an expedition to explore the interior of Baffinland in 1897, going north on the Peary Expedition of that year. Landed at Cape Haven with impedimenta and supplies for three years, intending after our work to come out at Cumberland Gulf and take a Scotch whaler to Aberdeen, and thus to U. S. A. Had a Summer of reconnaissance work in whale-boats up Frobisher Bay;

made complete circuit of bay—second party of “whites” at Silvia Grinnell and Jordan Rivers and first whites to explore the south shore of bay, which we charted. Forced to abandon original plans because distemper curtailed supply of sledge dogs. However, we did not give up our intention.

Next year joined the “rush of ’98” to Alaska with Copper River as goal. Side-tracked by rich samples of gold ore in S.E. Alaska, and spent year there, locating some very good ground.

Wintered in California, intending to return to Alaska in Spring of ’99. Instead, joined Peary Relief Expedition to north Greenland in order to perfect knowledge of arctic conditions so as later to explore Baffinland.

Mining in Colorado, 1900-1905.

Tried to equip expedition to Baffinland in 1905; plan of proposed expedition read before Polar Congress of that year at Brussels, Belgium, which was endorsed by the Congress; pulled such strings of influence as I had with Am. Geog. Soc.; Peary, Greely, Arctic and Explorers’ Clubs, National Geog. Soc.; Mr. Herbert Bridgeman of Peary Arctic Club; and even the Royal Geog. Society. Despite all efforts I failed to raise the necessary funds. Correspondence with Fiala and Stephenson, who were enthusiastic as always, also failed to help.

Afterward stayed with the mining game, mostly in Colorado, though to some extent in Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky; but camped, hunted, on foot and in the saddle, in Oregon, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Washington and northern California—all this time unable to break away or secure funds to prosecute the Baffinland exploratory work. Then, of course, Donald McMillan went after it and succeeded. (R. I. P.!!)

Am still at the mining game, temporarily in a back eddy, but like any other rollin’ stone I’m still ‘rarin’ to go! I even now have feelers reaching into Labrador, old Mexico, Ontario, British Columbia and Alaska, and while hoping, I’m shooting this at you merely to show you that my spirit of adventure, like your own, is far from dead.—VICTOR SHAW.

The full statement of the sections in this department as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Life in Persia

ANOTHER foreign oil-field being developed by Americans:

Questions:—I am an oil worker and have an opportunity to go to Persia for a large company; but, being a married man with a small son, I hesitate to accept, knowing nothing of the country. If you can I wish you would answer these few questions for me:

Is the climate a healthy one to take one’s family to?

What is the general attitude of the natives toward whites?

What nationalities in general comprise the population? Are there many whites? If any of these questions seem absurd or out of your line kindly disregard them.”—H. W. HART, Long Beach, Calif.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—Sorry to have been delayed in answering your letter, but being an adventurer myself, I am more or less “on the go” all the time. The coast region of Persia is humid and the climate unpleasant, but in the interior the climate is agreeable. Certain parts of the interior are very pleasant as a matter of fact, and living offers no trying problem whatsoever. The Persian himself is polite and will treat you rather well. There are many Americans in the oil-fields, I understand. I also believe that the oil-fields are situated in the most unpleasant part of Persia, where the climate is unhealthy and fever prevalent.

Frankly I would not consider leaving California with its many advantages and wonderful climate for Persia. If you definitely make up your mind to go, please let me know and I will suggest an outfit.

On the Trail of a Silver Lead

IN MINING talk a foot-wall is the rocky wall on the lower side of a mineral vein or of a fissure, or fault:

Question:—“My partners and myself have a silver lead in a granite formation, the silver lying in white quartz about four feet through and six hundred feet long. Lead also contains considerable lead and some gold and copper and lies across a steep mountain of blue granite.

As it was impossible to work down on the ore we decided to run a tunnel and have run 285 of the 430 feet to reach the ore, on which will have 300 feet of back. We have been drifting on the lead, which is about seven feet wide on the average. The strike is northeast and southwest and dips to the northwest. We have been in porphyry for 235 feet when we hit blue granite, which filled the lead except for a few inches on the foot-wall. We have been in granite from that time on, and it still continues.

Now I would like to ask your opinion as to whether this is a bad indication of the ore coming down or whether you think this granite will play out before we get to the ore. I do not think we can be off the lead as there are no faults visible on the surface and the foot-wall appears to be perfectly straight in the drift.”—ED. SCHULTZ, Coolidge, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—You didn’t say whether you are drifting or cross-cutting, but from the way your letter reads I judge you are drifting in on your vein. You’ve given me a rather tough problem, Schultz, because there have been many engineers who have made mistakes in judgment after even being on the ground and seeing the layout. You’re asking for an opinion on geological conditions from a very meager description in a letter—a hard proposition! However, I’ll say this: If you have kept careful watch of your walls, so that you are certain you’ve not missed some crevice or seam which *might* be your vein, then you should by all means follow your lode.

If you’ve done much mining you’ll know that veins expand and contract along their courses continually, and you are probably in an area of “pinching,” or perhaps a “horse” of granite may have come in, and will later go out.

Then too you know your ore chute (known on surface) may pitch away from you, so that you’ll

not strike it directly beneath the croppings. I mean, the ore body *in the vein*, which may be irregular in outline, may slant downward from the surface croppings at an angle under which you may now be driving, and it may open up anywhere ahead. I've known veins to pinch to a knife-blade streak and then open up again to original width. Keep on your vein-fissure! Sooner or later you should hit the ore, for 300 feet is practically surface and inside the area of secondary enrichment.

If your surface has not been tied into the tunnel heading by a competent surveyor, you can't tell a thing about where you are with reference to your croppings. Measurements with a tape are little short of useless. This may account for your apparent failure to reach the ore chute. Looks as if you'd have to drive ahead with some more arm-strong power and "giant." Luck to you.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

New Guinea, Island of Many Birds

STILL another inquirer who asks for "a definite reply" to a most indefinite letter. Make your questions specific; the "A. A." man does not have to reply otherwise:

Question:—"Kindly send me some general information on New Guinea such as inhabitants, hunting, etc.

I would also like to know if the carrying of weapons is allowed and if there is any work I could do there.

Is New Guinea under British jurisdiction, and are the laws reasonable? Also are there any minerals such as gold, silver, etc., to be found here?

I would very much appreciate a definite reply to my letter."—JACK W. NOWACK, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Armit:—You wish to hear something about the inhabitants, hunting, etc., of New Guinea? I can furnish the former two, but the et cetera is rather a tall order to reply to; there are so many et ceteras in this huge island. However, I'll do my best for you.

Let me preface my remarks with the statement that New Guinea or Papua—it has two names—is the largest island, except Greenland, in the world. It is a country of widely different peoples, for the natives are split up into hundreds of distinct tribes, and in many cases are as dissimilar as a Greek is from a Digger Indian. If you care to read some accurate information about the island, choose a volume from the following list, and I guarantee you will not be disappointed:

"Patrolling in Papua," by W. R. Humphries, 1 vol. T. Fisher Unwin.

"Papua or British New Guinea," by J. H. P. Murray. T. Fisher Unwin.

"Unexplored New Guinea," by Wilfred R. Beaver. Seeley Service & Co.

"Pygmies and Papuans," by A. S. R. Wollaston. "The Isle of Vanishing Men," by W. F. Alder.

Leonard Parsons, Ltd.

"Argonauts of the Western Pacific," by B. Malinowski, 1922.

"A Naturalist in Cannibal Land," by A. S. Meek. T. Fisher Unwin, 1913.

Inhabitants. New Guinea is situated in Melanesia, and its peoples may be termed Melanesians; but there are really two—perhaps three—distinct types of aborigines in the great island. The eastern portion is almost equally divided between brown and black-skinned peoples; the western half is mostly black-skinned tribes, some of them distinctly Semitic in features. Ethnologists classify them according to language—Melanesian and Papuan. Thus the Papuans are the original inhabitants, and the Papuo-Melanesians the immigrants that have trickled down from the northeastern island groups of Melanesia; the inhabitants are generally known as Papuans.

In the far interior the mountaineers are very different from the coastal and other dwellers on the ocean slopes, and some authorities suggest they are the survivors of the true aboriginal Papuan. This subject is too lengthy to discuss here; if you desire further information get hold of a copy of "The Melanesians of British New Guinea," by C. G. Seligmann, Cambridge University Press, London, B. I., which should be in any city library.

Hunting. There are no large animals except the hog and wallaby; the cassowary is the largest bird, and is not unlike an emu. The absence of big game is more than made up for by the extraordinary wealth of bird life; a host of glorious birds brightens the gloom of the thick jungles with their radiant plumage. The most gorgeous are the birds of paradise, of which there are dozens of species; but there are hundreds of others—parrots, pigeons, finches, doves, lories, and in the streams magnificent ospreys and various sorts of water-fowl.

The rivers harbor many crocodiles, but they are difficult to shoot owing to the swamps and morasses providing excellent cover for them when they leave the water to prowling about in search of food.

The plumaged birds are protected by the Government, so the danger of their extermination by ruthless plume-hunters is eliminated. If you stroll into any up-to-date natural-history museum you can usually find a fair collection of these lovely birds; no amount of description can give even the faintest idea of their magnificent coloring. I would not advise you even to consider Papua as a hunting-field, for with the prohibition of all traffic in plumes and birdskins, you could not make enough in a year from jungle-hog and wallaby to pay for the feeding of a butterfly for half a day.

Firearms. There is no restriction on Europeans owning firearms, but colored folk can use only fowling-pieces on a permit, which is only obtainable from a magistrate. Police restrictions prevent the wearing of arms in the towns and settlements. Any European can turn himself into a walking arsenal when he is away in the jungles.

Employment. New Guinea is well supplied with labor. Only men well conversant with the islands stand a chance of employment on the mines and plantations, and the demand for such labor is always less than the available supply. Consequently New Guinea is not a place for anybody to blow into on the chance of finding a job; in any case a man would be deficient in brains if he came along unless he had sufficient cash to keep him going for at least a year while he absorbed the local conditions and got used to the country and its peoples.

Government. New Guinea is divided into three

colonies; the western half belongs to Holland and is not as well developed as the eastern sections. The northeastern part with the Bismarck Archipelago formerly belonged to Germany; but a naval and military force from Australia took it in September, 1914, and it is now administered by Australia under a mandate from the League of Nations. The remainder of the island—the southern and eastern section—is owned by Australia and is the Territory of Papua. Its laws are practically the same as those in force in Australia.

Metals and Minerals. Gold, silver, osmiridium, copper, cinnabar, zinc, gypsum, coal, manganese, sulfur and graphite have been discovered within the Territory of Papua, but only gold and copper have been worked systematically. Gold occurs in the streams and terraces of the Mambare, Gira, Lakekamu and other fields; several quartz mines have produced the precious metal on Woodlark and St. Aignan Islands. Gold exported during 1922 was valued at \$343,000.

The heavy jungle prevents cheap prospecting, for only well-equipped parties with adequate transport porters can do any really useful work of this nature. New Guinea, unlike Australia, is no place for the lone-hand prospector, for the expense of penetrating into the interior is very great.

In conclusion I would stress the fact that New Guinea is not a place to blow into without funds, for the jobs available are always less than the normal supply of men.

If there is anything else you wish to know, write again, for I will always try and dig it up for you.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

An Auto Camping-Trip in New Brunswick

TOURS through the *Evangeline* country:

Question:—"I see that you give information about New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

A party of us are planning to take a two or three weeks' auto camping-trip through that section of Canada next Summer if everything goes as we have planned. Would like very much to get some information about that country if it would not be too much trouble to you. Last Summer we took a two-thousand-mile trip up to Montreal down to Quebec and then down through Maine to Connecticut. We liked Canada so much that we resolved to take a longer trip this coming year through the eastern part of Canada.

Could you tell us where we would want to enter Canada going in from Maine, and what would be a good trip to take after getting there? Would also like to know where we could get a road map; and what kind of roads we would be likely to strike? Could we expect any fishing, and what does a license cost for a non-resident? In fact any information that you could give us would be appreciated."—HARRY H. CHIDSEY, Lexington, Ky.

Answer, by Maj. Belford:—You can cross into New Brunswick either from Houlton, Me., to Woodstock, or lower down from Calais, Me., to St. Stephens.

Once in New Brunswick you have a choice of

procedure. You may go to St. John—you will eventually in any case—or if you cross at Houlton you may make St. John via Fredericton. This is the capital of the Province and is an interesting little city.

From St. John a very fine trip would be to go along the shore of the Bay of Fundy to the Isthmus of Chignecto, cross into Nova Scotia and along the north shore through Pictou to Sydney, Cape Breton, or from Pictou making your way to Halifax. From Halifax make the trip through the Annapolis Valley, *Evangeline's* country, when you can either go on to Digby and ferry back to St. John, or return by car.

Another trip would be, instead of going into Nova Scotia, to proceed from St. John to Moncton and north along the shore to Campbellton. From the latter place you can cross into Quebec and through the Matapedia Valley to the St. Lawrence. Then up the river to Quebec City.

A beautiful side-trip is from Matapedia down to Gaspé.

Of course your trip will depend on the time at your disposal, but any of these will be worth while.

Plenty of fishing almost anywhere. I am writing the New Brunswick Government to send you a copy of their publications *re* fish, and maps.

There is an automobile blue book covering this territory. The roads are generally fair. A marked improvement is taking place. When you receive the Government's publications, if there is anything more specific I can give please write again.

Sword-Blades

HOW steel is damasked and damascened (or damaskeened):

Question:—"What is a Damascus sword? A Toledo sword? Which is the best? What do you think is the best sword ever made?"

While I understand that the Filipino and East Indian edged weapons are outside your province could you tell me where I can get information about them, their origin, quality, etc.?"—JOHN H. WYTKAMPER, Annapolis, Md.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—At a period when most of Europe was using rudely forged arms the East, ever famous for beautiful weapons, in Hindustan, Persia, Khorassan and Java was showing wonderful results in inlaying, enameling and damascening. (Damascening on steel is the art of inlaying small threads of gold or silver into iron or steel.)

Damascus steel is melted steel on which many waved patterns are wrought by the presence of carburet of iron, brought out by means of acids. Other waved or watered patterns are made by means of small quantities of metals, such as platinum, silver or palladium. There are gray, black and brown damasks, which water the steel when mixed with it.

Cluett in 1804 was the first in France to imitate Damascus steel. He was greatly improved upon by Degrand, Gurgey, Conleause and particularly by Sodart and Faraday in 1822. The town of Liège did much of it.

Damascening is an entirely different work from the damask, being inlaying done in this manner: The workman, having fired the steel blade, engraves with a tool what he wishes; in the crevice he inlays

a narrow thread of metal, working it in with a blunt chisel, and when finished he goes over the whole with a very fine file.

Damascening was known and practised in Italy, Spain and Germany in the Middle Ages. A Toledo sword is one supposed to have been made in Toledo, Spain, although in all probability not all the blades we see marked "Toledo" have seen that city. Italy and Germany were celebrated for the manufacture of defensive arms, while Spain has been specially known for the manufacture of blades, amongst which Toledo ones were the best.

At the Renaissance period Italian armor and arms attained their highest perfection, the town of Milan being especially noted in this regard. Italy holds the first place for portable firearms (pistols being probably first invented there). In the seventeenth century Antonio Picinino—and more particularly well known, Andrea di Ferrara—were noted for their sword-blades. To answer one of your questions directly, I should doubt if the latter's best ones were ever surpassed.

However, in Spain, Madrid, Saint-Clément, Badajoz, Seville, Saragossa, Bilbao, Orgoz, Cuella, Valencia, Cordova, Valladolid, Catugel and particularly Toledo, are cities all of which are justly celebrated for their blades.

In Germany, Passau and Solingen—you will find the latter name on many of our higher-grade American military swords of Revolutionary and later times—were celebrated very early for manufacturing sword-blades, the quality of which was held in as high estimation as those of Toledo. Arms were made in Solingen as early as the twelfth century, when the art was first introduced by Styrian armorers. Originally there was in Solingen a stamp office in the market-place, where every armorer had to bring his wares to be proved and stamped. Damascening in Germany was carried on by a much more solid process than in Spain. In Flanders, Liège and in Russia, Toul was famous for their arms as early as 1712.

In India, Gwalior and Lushkur were widely known for their blades, Delhi for shields and Nurwur and Lahore for firearms. For damascened arms Shahjahanabad easily held first place in India. Persia and Hindustan were still manufacturing damascened weapons of rare beauty as late as 1860.

The Philippines and India are, as you say, a little out of my particular subject or interest, although I have some few blades and firearms from both.

If you have it not, I would suggest that you send fifty cents to Francis Bannerman's Sons, 501 Broadway, N. Y., for their 500-page illustrated catalog. They are the largest arms dealers in the world—old arms. The catalog is an education in this line and has illustrations of nearly all kinds of arms, ancient and modern. For information as to origin, quality, etc., of the arms you speak of, I would suggest that you look in some large public library, where subjects are typically catalogued, and you ought to find books on these subjects.

P. S.—Of course, arms were made at Damascus, but a blade might be damascened without ever having seen that city. It would be impossible to state that either a Toledo or a Damascus sword was the better. I think you will understand by what I have written.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Ranches of Texas

ONE is bigger than Rhode Island; another specializes on a beef hybrid, known as the "cattalo:"

Question:—"What is the acreage of the largest ranch in Texas? Is it still operated as a whole, or has it been divided? If so, when?"

Please name a couple of the present largest ranches and their acreage.

Being from Texas (Greenville) and naturally a Texas booster, I have told of some of the large ranches in that State with the result that I was called on to prove my statements. I stated that there was a ranch at one time in Texas of 3,000,000 acres."—C. A. KLINE, McKee's Rocks, Penn.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—The largest ranch in Texas is the King ranch, which covers part of three counties and consists of over a million acres. The property belongs to the King estate. It is thirty-six miles from the front gate to the front door of the ranch house.

Mr. King has been dead for several years. His widow has homes in Corpus Christi, Brownsville and Kingsville. Ex-President Taft's brother has married into the family, and a town—Taft—has been named after him. There are a large number of towns and cities scattered over the ranch.

This is the largest privately owned ranch in the State. Other large ranches have a few hundred thousand acres owned, and then land is leased from the State in large numbers of sections, or from other individuals whose property adjoins those of the ranches so that the latter have plenty of grazing-land for their herds.

The Goodnight ranch in Armstrong and Donley Counties is about the next largest privately owned ranch. This ranch has the largest herd of buffalo. They are being cross-bred with Hereford and other large-frame cattle. The offspring are called cattalo and make the largest beef cattle. There are several hundred thousands of acres in this ranch.

In the southwestern part of the State near the Rio Grande and near the border of New Mexico there are quite a number of other large ranches, some having from a half-million acres up. Most of the land is leased from the State though.

Another large privately owned ranch is the Littlefield ranch, located in Lamb, Hale, and Hockley Counties. Mr. Littlefield died at his home here in Austin in 1921; since then his property has been handled by trustees.

You may have confused the large ranch of Luis Terraza, ex-Governor of the State of Chihuahua, Mexico, with these in Texas. His ranch had over three millions of acres in it, extending from Juarez almost to Chihuahua City. During the Villa revolution he fled the country over here. He has disposed of his ranch to a syndicate that is going to use it for colonization purposes, cutting the ranch up into small tracts and selling these to homeseekers.

In the early days of Texas more than likely there were ranches of several millions of acres in them. The land was not owned by any one, so all that a person had to do was to turn a bunch of cattle loose on the land and let them go. Twice a year there were round-ups, and by riding for days a man would get all of his cattle together. The land that

he traveled over could be called his ranch, for his stock was on it.

Hope that this dope will be of help to you in winning your argument.

Enclosed is a monograph on Texas. Let them look that over.

Bicycle Touring in the United States

TWO and a half million miles of good highway:

Question:—"I am or was an enthusiastic hiker; but last Fall I took a bicycle trip through Indiana and Kentucky, and now I don't like hiking so well. What I want to know is this:

Is it feasible and possible to take a bicycle trip through Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas? If one wished could he continue on into California? I wish to start about September 1st. Would one encounter good or bad roads? Also if I wished to continue on the road would it be possible to earn my way at this time of year? For long trips is bicycle touring preferable to hiking?"—HARRY ALVIS, West Liberty, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Whether one goes hiking or bicycling is almost wholly a question of choice. I have done both, and am astonished that more do not go touring on bicycles. There are some 2,500,000 miles of highway in the United States, including streets. Concrete, macadam, and wonderful dirt roads are available clear to the Rockies. Grades are now easy. Compared to the bicycle trails I followed, bicycle tripping would be easy now.

You would find a trip through Missouri, Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma somewhat difficult on account of mud and rutted roads. The western regions of Texas could be traversed, subject always to desert conditions and rain in the central part. But I should say if you went across Missouri, down through Little Rock, Ark., and into Ft. Worth, Tex., you would be stopped by mud. My choice would be across Iowa on the Lincoln, south from Omaha across Kansas and central Oklahoma, through Ft. Worth and on the Bankhead Highway to El Paso—a wonderful trip with hundreds of miles of desert that is

dangerous if not prepared for, with water and foresight as to trails, conditions, etc.

Highways lead to California from El Paso or *via* Amarillo and the Sante Fé Trail. You should have a good map of the trails of the country—Sectionized Map of U. S., published by the National Survey, Chester, Vt., is one of the best convenient books. I went to Texas by mine:

As to earning your way—that depends. Work is to be had here and there. I enclose a slip. Good luck.

Whales

BIGGEST animals that ever lived:

Question:—"Have heard so much about how large an article a whale can swallow, but doubt some of these stories, so would like to have you explain this if it's in your line.

Also give me some idea of their weight, and about how they spawn.

Has the whale any enemies in the deep sea? Enclosed find postage."—FRANK NOLL, Frankfort, So. Dak.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—The Greenland whale has a small gullet. It can swallow only small objects. But the sperm-whale, or cachalot, has an enormous throat, easily big enough to swallow lumps of deep-sea squid weighing upward of sixty pounds.

There is little difference in the respective size of these two species of whales. Of course there is a vast difference in the size of individual whales of either species. Take a range between thirty tons and a hundred tons, and you will find most whales come within these limits, although my father, one of the old-school whalers out of Peterhead, told me he had cut in a sperm-whale registering a hundred and twenty tons.

A whale does not spawn. Whales are not fish nor reptiles, but animals. They bring forth calves as land cows do, and suckle them at the breast. As for enemies, there is the thresher whale, which gangs together and licks Mr. Whale—*sometimes*—and the giant squid, which the whale eats. The whale is a whale of a survivor against all but man.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

BURKE. Former sergeant in U. S. Army. Wireless operator on Trans-Pacific Army transport for five years. Believed to be working in vicinity of San Luis Obispo, Calif. Write—Address "SPIDER" MORR, Naval Air Station, Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, T. H.

BUCKLEY, JIM. Your friends are anxious to hear from you. Please write—Address HAZEL and ANDY TAYLOR, Room 805, 830 Market St., San Francisco, Calif.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 28th issue all un-found names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

F. P. H. Last heard of on board S.S. *Nelson*. Gave letter to your mother. Will send you a letter care of *Adventure*, N. Y. C. Have it forwarded to you, and let me know through *Adventure* if you receive it—"BIRD."

DE FOE, CLARENCE. Last heard from at St. Joseph, Missouri. Any information will be appreciated—Address R. W. LYLES, 705 Adams St., Macon, Ga.

I WAS born about Aug. 27, 1897, in Spokane, Wash. My mother supposedly died soon after, and my father was killed in a mine in Idaho. I was taken care of by a woman for several months, and finally turned over to a home-finding association in Spokane, which was kept by a Mr. Williams, and his wife Thurza. A local couple adopted me on Oct. 18, 1898. Am probably of Irish or German American descent. Would like very much to find my own people or some one who knew about them.—Address Mrs. JACK PENHALLURICK, R. 1, Edvall, Washington.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

MCDONALD, MRS. ANNA. (Maiden name Anna Pierce.) Last heard from in Vancouver, B. C., Canada. Any information will be appreciated by her cousin—Address NAOMIE DAVIES, 88 Marchmont Road, Toronto, Canada.

LOVE, HARRY. Last heard from in Yermo, Calif. Write—Address W. H. SPRING, 4431 N. Monticello Ave., Chicago, Ill.

A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 30th and June 30th issues of Adventure.

WHITE, CHESTER ALLEN. Formerly of Albia, Iowa. Left his home in 1904 at the age of fourteen years. Last heard from at Lincoln, Nebraska in 1907. Any information will be appreciated by his aged mother.—Address THOMAS HICKENLOOPER, Albia, Iowa.

THE following have been inquired for in either the February 20th or March 20th, 1924, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

AKERS, RALPH P.; Arthur, D. P. Jr.; Branson, Hosea L.; Burdick, L. H.; Caples, Albert; Carrere, Joseph Maxwell Jr.; Cate, William C.; Cooper, Andrew D.; Douglas, Wallace; Edwards, Thomas; Fulton, Frank; Hansen, Anders; Howe, Charles; Kane, Thomas Edward; Long, Leonard C.; Lusk, John; McCoy, W. C.; McRae, Norman N.; Morgan, John; Murray, Richard H.; Olson, Lawrence T.; Renz, Carrie; Rogers, Ellis; Sharpe, Lester B.; Spies, Chas. W.; Thompson, Chester; Thorp, William; Tomlin, Bradley; Trainor, Owen P.; Uhl, James.

MISCELLANEOUS—Charles; C. B.; Ek; Honey; Manlove family; Tom; W. N. S.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

APRIL 20TH ISSUE

Besides the new serial and three complete novelettes mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

"RED PIG" OF THE NORTH

Horses, goats, Mexicans and trouble.

Barry Scobee

THE STAGE GOES BY An Article

How men fought for the rule of the road in the Old West.

Michael J. Phillips

THE KING OF NO MAN'S LAND A Four-Part Story Conclusion

"I found a ruin and I made a home."

Arthur O. Friel

BLOOD ROYAL

A king, a bishop and a knight-at-arms.

H. C. Bailey

HI-JACK

A bad-man of the New East.

Edward Speyer



Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by Arthur D. Howden Smith, Gordon MacCreagh, H. C. Wire, Leonard H. Nason, Frederick Moore, Charles Victor Fischer, W. C. Tuttle, Thomson Burtis and Captain Mansfield; and short stories by John Webb, Conroy Kroder, Dale Collins, George E. Holt, F. St. Mars, Nevil Henshaw, J. D. Newsom, J. H. Greene, William Byron Mowery and others—stories of cowboys, vikings, Incas, soldiers, deep-sea divers, pioneers, Cajans, gobs, aviators, Moroccans, mariners, South Sea planters, Filipinos, doughboys, Australian prospectors, adventurers the world around.

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Address



Will There Be Another Great War in 30 Years?

WILL the wealth of the United States tempt unscrupulous countries? E. Phillips Oppenheim, the famous novelist, has written a tremendous novel appearing in **EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE** on the subject of International politics in the year 1950. He pictures an International Congress in which all is apparently serene,

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